

THE STORY SERMON AS A MINISTRY TO CHILDREN AND ADULTS
IN THE LIGHT OF PSYCHOLOGICAL INSIGHT AND NEW
TESTAMENT UNDERSTANDING OF PARABLE

A Professional Project
Presented to
the Faculty of the School of Theology
at Claremont, California

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Ministry

by
John Kenneth Bontrager

June 1977

This professional project, completed by

John Kenneth Bontrager,

*has been presented to and accepted by the Faculty
of the School of Theology at Claremont in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of*

DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

Faculty Committee

Burton L. Mack.
David B. Chamberlain

April 12, 1977
Date

Joseph C. Haugli, Jr.
Dean

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT	iv
Chapter	
1. THE PRIMITIVE YET CONTEMPORARY NATURE OF STORY	1
2. THE PSYCHOLOGY OF STORY	16
3. THE PARABLE AS A TEACHING MODEL	38
4. THE STORY SERMON AS PARABLE	64
5. THE STORY SERMON AS MINISTRY TO CHILDREN AND ADULTS	88
BIBLIOGRAPHY	95

ABSTRACT

The story as an art form is an ancient method for communicating thought and feeling. As such the story keeps alive certain beliefs, knowledge, and morality. Long before there was written language the story was a potent medium for sustaining family, tribal, or national attitudes and prejudices, thus maintaining a community spirit.

The story also has a great potential to communicate truth for people today. Moderns are rediscovering the possibilities in this teaching device. Educators, psychologists, sociologists, theologians, and other professionals in their own investigation and research have lauded the value of the historical method of story and see new potentials in this method for modern man. This professional project uses the psychological model of Transactional Analysis and New Testament scholarship of the understanding of parable to evaluate the potential of story as ministry to modern persons of all ages.

The story speaks to the rational dimension of personality but goes much deeper. A story is "understood" by intuition and feeling in addition to rational analysis and evaluation. The story strikes a resonance in the subconscious, activating deep feelings, understanding, and response. As an art form, the message of story is within the story, and not some interpretation, explanation,

evaluation, application by the storyteller. Like a painting, musical number, or a poem, the story has its message within itself to speak to the listener. To turn a story into allegory or illustration is to risk prostitution of its message and contamination of the understanding of the listener. To tell what a story means can rob the listener of the story experience. To feel that every story must have an obvious moral is to seriously handicap the full possibility of the story.

Jesus used the story in his ministry to communicate truths about God and faith that could not be taught abstractly. The parables of Jesus are beautiful and meaningful expressions of the personality of God and the existential predicament of people. The parables are not constricting but open-ended. The parables use a simple language to talk about commonplace situations. They were not intended really to be illustrations, allegories, or models of morality, but to tell of God in relationship with people in the ordinary events of life. There is a freshness of looking at relationships that goes beyond the traditional. Prior conceptions and values are often reversed, new options seen, old judgments reversed, and established conclusions superceded.

People are often uncomfortable with a story without a moral or some concrete teaching. They want to know what the story means. They crave certainty, answers, precepts, and programs. The value of the story, however, is seen in

the participation of the hearer in the story event.

The story sermon, rather than being a break in the worship service to spend time talking to the children, can actually be an opportunity of ministry to persons of all ages. The precedence for using this method is to be found in Jesus who gained a reputation as a teller of stories. The story is an effective medium to share religious experience. The deep feelings of faith and love which are difficult to convey through ordinary language, can be shared effectively through the story sermon.

The Kingdom of God can be a reality for persons to experience today. The story sermon can administer the reality of the Kingdom of God within our midst. It can share the truth that God is involved in the world today through the commonplace of living.

Chapter 1

THE PRIMITIVE YET CONTEMPORARY
NATURE OF STORY

The mystics and the poets always get there first.¹

The telling of stories is one of the oldest arts in the world. Ranking with the painter of pictures, the composer of music, the creator of poems, the interpreter of the divine, the storyteller in a special way used the art form of spoken and written language to communicate truth and feeling.

You cannot tell people what to do, you can only tell them parables, and that is what art really is, particular stories of particular people and experiences. . . .²

Each generation, every country, under all kinds of conditions, has had its storytellers. Many useful purposes are built into this art form. The story may be used for entertainment purposes on the one end of the spectrum to the transmitter of customs, duties, theological positions, and loyalties on the other.

Man is a storytelling animal. As our primitive

¹Gail Sheehy, Passages, Predictable Crises of Adult Life (New York: Dutton, 1976), p. 12.

²W. H. Auden in M. K. Spears, The Poetry of W. H. Auden, quoted by John D. Crossan, In Parables--The Challenge of the Historical Jesus (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), p. 1.

ancestors sat around the fire carving spearheads and eating blackberries they told stories which in time were woven into a tapestry of myth and legend. These tales were the first encyclopedia of human knowledge. They explained where the world came from, why there were people, why snakes have no legs, why corn smut stops birth hemorrhages, why conch shells are sacred, why coyotes howl at night, and why the gods put fire and death on earth. . . . Stories told the people of a tribe who they were, where they had been, and where they were going, and how to stay friendly with the spirits.³

The storyteller provides a needed service to the community by keeping alive certain beliefs, knowledge, and ethics. While performing an invaluable insight as to where a certain community or tribe of antiquity stood on issues, the storyteller held powerful influence over the lives of the people.

Seumaus MacManus says: "Story-telling is one of the oldest arts in the world--and one of the most joy-giving. . . . In the greatest story-telling country in the world, Ireland, the professional story-teller, called in the Gaelic language, the Shanachie, took rank with princes. . . . And still, thank God, we have the beautiful story-teller in the glens among the hills of Ireland."⁴

The dictionary gives a broad picture of art, having many facets in its understanding.

Art . . . L. artis, gen. of ars . . . to join, fit together . . . 1. human ability to make things; creativity of man as distinguished from the world of nature 2. skill; craftsmanship 3. any specific skill or its application . . . 4. any craft, trade, or profession, or its principles . . . 5. creative work or

³Sam Keen and Anne V. Fox, Telling Your Story (New York: New American Library, 1973), p. 7.

⁴Seumaus MacManus, 1924-25 Year Book, National Story Teller's League, quoted by Cynthia Maus, Christ and the Fine Arts (New York: Harper & Bros., 1938), p. 14.

its principles; making or doing of things that display form, beauty, and unusual perception . . . 6. any branch of creative work . . . 7. products of creative work . . . 8. pictorial and decorative material accompanying the text in a newspaper, magazine . . . 9. (a) (Archaic) learning (b) a branch of learning; specif., (pl.) the liberal arts . . . as distinguished from the sciences . . .⁵

The story has many of the above features. It does help "fit together" much of life and living. There is creativity, skill, beauty, unusual perception, and powerful influence. "A story is a mind picture painted by the human voice instead of the human hand. A story is a great life-message that passes from one soul to another."⁶

The story that is communicated by human voice, has the power of language, with all the charisma of the storyteller. The personality, tone of voice, facial expressions, gestures, variation of voice, rate of speaking, breath control, pantomime, impersonation, mimicry, emotions, all combine to capture and hold the attention of the listeners and powerfully influence not only thinking, but feelings and behavior.

Poetry is thought, sometimes philosophy, sometimes argument, but always emotion [italics in the original]. The poet wants to tell us how he feels about his subject. It is an experience rather than a proposition. So poetry belongs to those realms of life where we feel most deeply.⁷

⁵Webster's New World Dictionary (Cleveland: Collins and World, 1976).

⁶Maus, p. 15.

⁷Theodore Soars, Finding God Through the Beautiful, quoted by Maus, p. 11.

What is said here of the art form of poetry can also be said of the art of story. Truth and data may often be a part of stories, but one cannot understand or appreciate the potential within the story without understanding the emotions at play, in the storyteller, the story, and the listener. The story is "an experience rather than a proposition."

But there are many other levels of knowledge besides the intellectual. For example, knowledge is revealed by the poet and by the artist. An artist is making a statement about reality in a very different way from a scientist, but it is equally a statement about reality. The kind of truth that art communicates is not a factual or verifiable truth but a truth found in images which communicate meaning and which evoke responses of the emotions. It is perhaps significant that in the course of Christian history something of the transcendence, beauty and love of God has been better communicated through the paintings of Michelangelo, the glory of ancient cathedrals, and the writings of great poets, than through creeds and philosophies.⁸

So also the storyteller as truth is communicated more through the emotions than the intellect. The history of cultures have been transmitted through long lists of generations by the story and the storyteller.

Throughout the history of mankind the story has been one of the greatest factors in the making of the history of nations and peoples; because in stories are mirrored the feelings and emotions, the passions and purposes, the loves and hatreds, the justices and injustices, the defeats and victories of mankind.⁹

Modern man has learned historians to transcribe

⁸Douglas A. Rhymes, Through Prayer to Reality (Nashville: Upper Room, 1974), p. 28.

⁹Maus, p. 15.

events, heroes, and catastrophies. But even with perfected methods of recording facts, from hieroglyphics in caves to computer banks in air conditioned vaults, history is more than facts. An honest historian knows that he records data, but he also knows that the data is colored by interpretation, commentary, and emotion. Even a modern historian tells his "story." But in early times, before written language was developed and recording devices were perfected, the storyteller was one of the few bridges to the aspirations and experiences of a people.

Preliterate man lived in a world which received its intellectual, religious, and social structure through the story. Each tribe had its own set of tales, myths, and legends which defined the metaphysical context within which it lived, gave a history of the sacred foundation of its social rituals, and provided concrete models of authentic life. Thus the telling of stories was a way of justifying and sanctioning those values which were essential to the preservation of the community.

. . . The story served the diverse functions of philosophy, theology, ethics, and entertainment. It served to locate the individual within the concentric circles of the cosmos, nature, the community, and the family, and it provided a concrete account of what was expected of a man and what he might expect in that darkness which lies beyond death.¹⁰

Folklore is a type of story that gives us clues to the thinking and feeling of primitive persons.

There are many diverse functions of folklore. Some of the most common ones include aiding in the education of the young, promoting a group's feeling of solidarity, providing socially sanctioned ways for individuals to act superior to or to censure other individuals, serving as a vehicle for social

¹⁰Sam Keen, To a Dancing God (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), p. 87.

protest, offering an enjoyable escape from reality and converting dull words into play.¹¹

Alan Dundee sees more than educational and entertaining factors in the story telling of primitive peoples. He states that a certain group spirit is fostered which permits in-groups, favoritism, special privilege and position. As a result certain persons feel and act one-up over those who do not possess these magical and mysterious insights.

Psychologists, sociologists, educators, and other professionals have analyzed the process of folklore. Many theories have been formulated to explain the function of the primitive story. Ernest Jones suggests that the primitive story represents relics of the primitive mental state, fragments left over in the process of evolution. He sees the value of the primitive story as a glimpse into the primitive mind before it has undergone evolution.

Psychoanalysis has produced much evidence to show that all our conscious ideas, feelings, interests, and beliefs originate in the unconscious; the conscious mind originates nothing, its functions being confined to criticism, selection, and control. Unconscious impulses may be called primitive both as being earlier in development in time, thus being nearly synonymous with "infantile," and as representing a lower stage in mental evolution, one out of which more highly differentiated forms of mental activity develop.¹²

The appeal of the story seems to trace its

¹¹Alan Dundee (ed.), The Study of Folklore (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1965), p. 277.

¹²Ernest Jones, "Psychoanalysis and Folklore," in *Ibid.*, pp. 91-92.

attraction to a primitive resonance within the subconscious mind that is inherent to mankind. There is built into persons something that is timeless and universal. The phrase in Psalm 42:7 sums it up well, "Deep calleth unto deep . . ." (King James Version). All mankind has shared in this mysterious attraction of the story, which understands and appreciates through the sub-rational. The powerful resources that the ancient person found in story can still be known by modern man, as the story appeals to this unconscious magnetic force. The storyteller of every generation appeals to this basic sensitivity that lies inherent within human personality. However, some people have become insensitive to the power and potential of the story because of rational sophistication, pride, indifference, or scientific complacency.

. . . since the enlightenment and the emergence of less dramatic but more scientific modes of thought, Western man has found great comfort in telling himself that he has come of age and passed beyond the primitive darkness of myth into the full light of reason. Therefore, in most accounts of the intellectual history of man, one may detect a sigh of relief when the narrative leaves the poetic-mythical thought of archaic man and focuses on the development of rational philosophical thought in the Greek city-state.¹³

Sam Keen goes on to say that there has been a rediscovering of the potential within the story.

It is only within the present century that the metaphor of the story and the outline of the traditional drama which have been commonplace in Western civilization have been radically criticized and

¹³Keen, pp. 87-88.

widely abandoned. . . . The conviction is gone that history tells a story or that reality may be appropriately known in dramatic terms. . . . The new metaphor which reflects modern experience is the happening.¹⁴

The scriptures have been a rich source of stories.

All sacred writings contain an outer and an inner meaning. Behind the literal words lies another range of meaning, another form of knowledge. According to an age-old tradition, man once was in touch with this inner knowledge and inner meaning. There are stories in the Old Testament which convey another knowledge, a meaning quite different from the literal sense of the words. The story of the Ark, the story of Pharaoh's butler and baker, the story of the Tower of Babel, the story of Jacob and Esau and the mess of pottage, and many others, containing an inner psychological meaning far removed from their literal level of meaning. And in the Gospels the parable is used in a similar way [*italics in the original*].¹⁵

At one time the story material of the Old Testament was interpreted in terms of the psychological or inner meaning. Gradually, there was a shift to one of two extremes, one being that of a literal interpretation, and the other of a rational expose and analysis. These approaches compromised the original meaning and potential of story, and contaminated the message.

The idea behind all sacred writing is to convey a higher meaning than the literal contains, the truth of which must be seen by man internally [*italics in the original*]. This higher, concealed, inner, or esoteric meaning, cast in the words and sense images of ordinary usage can only be grasped by the understanding, and it is exactly here that the first difficulty lies in conveying higher meaning to man. A person's literal level of understanding is not necessarily equal to grasping psychological meaning. To understand literally is one

¹⁴Ibid., p. 94.

¹⁵Maurice Nicoll, The New Man (London: Stuart, 1958), p. 1.

thing; to understand psychologically is another.¹⁶

The parable is an ancient type of story which was adopted and perfected by Jesus. Traditionally, the parables of Jesus were treated either as elaborate allegories by the church or as narrow literal authoritarian directives. Both extremes controlled and dictated understanding and thus misunderstood the timeless messages of Jesus. It has been in recent decades that the fuller meaning and potential of the parables of Jesus have been rediscovered.

The language of parables is difficult to understand, just as is, in general, the language of all sacred writings. Taken on the level of literal understanding, both the Old and New Testaments are full not only of contradictions but of cruel and repulsive meaning.¹⁷

Maurice Nicoll sees the understanding of parable as coming through "higher thinking," or "lifting understanding" which he sees as a higher level in the development of the understanding that unlocks the message which he sees in code. It is the thesis of this paper that storytelling is an ancient but also contemporary method of conveying truth. This art form, of which parable is an important part communicates feelings and beliefs, as well as knowledge. Rational understanding is important to grasp the message, but the inner message is known through intuition which lies deep in the subconscious.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 2

¹⁷Ibid., p. 1.

The story has a place within the Christian faith, not only to keep alive certain beliefs, knowledge, and morality, but to give theological insights which often cannot be taught directly.

Though Robert B. Downs was writing about "the tall tale" which is one type of story, I propose that his analysis applies also to a general psychology of story.

Several experts have essayed analysis of the tall tale--a dangerous enterprise, for any specimen is likely to disintegrate and be spoiled by too minute study. "Humor can be dissected as a frog can," E. B. White warns, "but the thing dies in the process and the innards are discouraging to any but the pure scientific mind."¹⁸

Let the story speak for itself. Sometimes it is necessary to grasp certain facts concerning the conditions, environment, historical situation, beliefs, or prejudices in order to be sensitized to what is going on in the story (e.g., the prejudices of the Jews toward the Samaritans in the Parable of the Good Samaritan). So often, people in seeking authoritarian or simplistic answers, demand that they be told just what a story means. Much is lost in a translation or an explanation.

. . . [Jesus] merely told a story, a parable, and let the people draw their own conclusions. We are very much like the Apostles: we can't enjoy the simple, moving story, but immediately demand, "What does it mean? What should we do?" They were even given to finding moral lessons in physical deformity. When they saw a cripple or a blind man, they asked

¹⁸Robert B. Downs, The Bear Went Over the Mountain, Tall Tales of American Animals (New York: Macmillan, 1964), p. xvi.

Christ whose fault had produced this physical evil . . . and our Lord chastized them for it. We fall into the same error when we torture every work of art for some moral message.¹⁹

The true artist, whether poet, painter, musician, or storyteller often refuses to make his art either allegory or controlled literalism, by telling people what to see, to hear, or to understand. Some teaching material may result when the artist or storyteller allegorizes, but much of the real message is lost in the interpretation for the witness. Jesus used parables to enlighten the understanding of people including the disciples. Often he would tell a parable without commentary. When, however, the listeners requested further explanation, Jesus sometimes turned the story into an allegory or illustration. In doing so a message came through in a direct but controlled way (e.g., The Parable of the Sower and Seeds, Luke 8:5-15, noting verse 9, "And when his disciples asked him what this parable meant, he said . . ."). The meaning of the story shifted from a "Once upon a time" to a concrete message about life). The parabolic method will be examined in detail in Chapter 3 of this paper.

Many people think of the story only as a vehicle for teaching little children. The story method of making truth live, however, is not limited in its use to childhood; because the story is a universal teaching method--it is the vehicle by which truth for any and every age must be graphically shared.²⁰

¹⁹Anthony Schillaci, Movies and Morals (Notre Dame, IN: Fides, 1970), p. 25.

²⁰Maus, p. 15.

The story has a timeless, universal, and chronologically ageless appeal, but too often in the church the story as a teaching medium or ministry vehicle unfortunately is directed to the children alone. In the Sunday School, junior church, the story is an acceptable method of conveying truth, but often is ignored or misused in a formal worship service where all ages attend.

At times there is a portion of the worship service set apart to speak to the children. These periods are planned to minister to the little ones of the congregation. The church leaders need to evaluate this method of teaching to make these periods a part of an effective ministry to children of all ages. By learning to tell stories effectively the leader of worship has a powerful tool for teaching within a formal worship service and also in the classroom. The story as told in a worship experience can convey meaningful truth about God and man. There are many opinions about this practice within the church.

The children's sermon represents another kind of effort, a kind that goes farther. A brief service designed for children is inserted in the regular service. In this fact of insertion a weakness is present; there is no adequate preparation in what goes before, no effective follow up; and the continuity of the adult service is interrupted.²¹

The authors of the above statement miss the value of the story in worship and do not see the potential of

²¹ Mildred M. and Frank Eakin, The Pastor and the Children (New York: Macmillan, 1947), p. 59.

the story as a ministry for persons of all ages. The authors lament:

. . . the common remark by ministers, "My grown-ups say they get more out of the children's sermon than they do out of the regular one," has other than surface significance. What it points to is not effectiveness on the part of the children's sermon for the meeting of children's needs so much as ineffectiveness on the part of the regular sermon--lack of simplicity and directness--for the meeting of adult needs.²²

Sermons should be understandable, simple, direct, and carefully prepared and delivered. That is not the case in point. Not only is the potential of the story not being realized for the total congregation, but there is an ignorance and disregard for this typical method of Jesus, which was the primitive method of story.

Far too often, as ministers attempt to reach the children, object lessons are used and are labeled "story sermons." This method does arouse and hold interest but there is usually much moralizing, allegorizing, or directed interpretation. The religious book market is saturated with books of object lessons, most of which miss the real value and potential of story. This theme will be developed in detail in Chapters 4 and 5.

This is what fools people: a man is always a teller of tales, he lives surrounded by his stories and the stories of others, he sees everything that happens to him through them; and he tries to live his own life as if he were telling a story.²³

²²Ibid.

²³Jean-Paul Sartre, quoted by Keen, p. 95.

Sam Keen and Anne Fox pick up on this idea of Sartre that man not only tells the stories of others, he tells his own story. He is his own story.

With a little imagination each person can find within himself a replacement for the myths and stories lost when we ceased living in tribes. A person is a complex thing made up of a million individual smells, tastes, memories, and hopes. Listen for a few minutes to the voices that run through your own mind. Every psyche is a private theater filled with scenes and characters. Listen and you will hear your father, mother . . . teachers, and heroes seize your stage and act out their own dramas. Hear the multiple voices within yourself and you will remember that you belong to a special clan. Your people still inhabit you. They will help you celebrate your myths, sing your songs, and tell your legends.²⁴

Keen and Fox suggest that for a person to ascertain the basis for one's story certain questions should be asked:

. . . what wounds or hurts do you resent having suffered? What gifts were you given for which you were grateful? Who were your important heroes and models? What were the crucial decisions for which you were responsible? [*italics in the original*]²⁵

In telling stories, including their own stories, humans affirm reality, causing their world to fit together and have meaning. In the same way the past, present, and the future are seen to be tied together in a commonness and unity. Ancient man and modern man have the resource of story to give understanding and wholeness to life and living.

The story is an art form that must give room for

²⁴Keen and Fox, p. 8.

²⁵Keen, p. 73.

experiential understanding. To turn a story into allegory, or to accept every word as literal meaning is too constricting, and will miss the message that the storyteller has in mind and heart. Stories have traditionally been used for a variety of purposes, ranging from entertainment to a history of a people. Stories also bring out beliefs, ethics, myths, feelings of solidarity, group spirit, customs, traditions, loyalties, knowledge, and expectations.

Psychologists believe that ideas, feelings, interests, and beliefs originate in the subconscious. A story may reawaken experiences and data, and produce a resonance within the receiver as the Psalmist stated "Deep calleth unto deep . . ." All sacred writings have an outer and inner message. In certain periods, because of the popularity of scientific examination, rational sophistication, or because of complacency and indifference the full potential of story has gone unnoticed. There is a reawakening interest in story in this century.

The art [of storytelling] carries with it and fosters community feeling, the brotherhood of man, fireside magic, home influence, and joy. . . . The story-teller is as the Promised Land, alluring, fruitful, joy-giving--his mind a blessed region flowing with milk and honey. The story-teller refreshes the weary, rejoices the sad, and multiplies the joy of those who are already glad. He is a God-gift to the community. Welcome him, nurture him, cherish him.²⁶

²⁶MacManus, p. 14.

Chapter 2

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF STORY

Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the Kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it.¹

To understand the psychology of story one must turn to the makeup of personality and the dynamics of interpersonal relationships. This paper will use the insights of the Transactional Analysis model as formulated and developed by Eric Berne and his associates.

Transactional Analysis (T.A.) is an easily understandable tool for evaluating the personality. The division of T.A. that deals with the makeup of personality is called structural analysis. T.A. talks of "ego states" and attempts to identify three classes:

1. Those that resemble the ego state of a parent, i.e., of someone who is acting parentally.
2. Those in which the facts offered by the environment are dealt with objectively.
3. Archaic ego states that resemble closely those found in infants and young children of various ages. Ego states are regarded as products of mental organs: the exteropsyché, the neopsyché, and the archaeopsyché. The exteropsyché deals with those that are borrowed from other people, usually the parents, and are imitative; the neopsyché deals with those that are concerned with the objective analysis of the internal mental and the external physical environments; and the archaeopsyché contains ego states that are left over from early childhood and are still active under

¹Mark 10:15 (RSV).

certain conditions.²

Berne goes on to note the implications of the ego states by writing:

1. That every individual has had parents (or substitute parents) and that he carries within him a set of ego states that reproduce the states of those parents (as he perceived them), and that these parental ego states can be activated under certain circumstances (exteropsychic functioning). Colloquially: "Everyone carries his parents around inside of him."

2. That every individual (including children, the mentally retarded and schizophrenics) is capable of objective data processing if the appropriate ego state can be activated (neopsychic functioning). Colloquially: "Everyone has an Adult."

3. That every individual was once younger than he is now, and that he carries within him fixated relics from earlier years which will be activated under certain circumstances (archaeopsychic functioning). Colloquially: "Everyone carries a little boy or girl around inside of him."³

In another book Berne further clarifies the conception of the ego state.

The term "ego state" is intended to denote states of mind and their related patterns of behavior as they occur in nature, and avoids in the first instance the use of constructs such as "instinct," "culture," "super-ego," "animus," "eidetic," and so forth. Structural analysis postulates only that such ego states can be classified and clarified.⁴

Berne and other T.A. authors find it helpful and necessary to compare the ego states with the popularized

²Eric Berne, The Structure and Dynamics of Organizations and Groups (New York: Grove, 1963), p. 130.

³Eric Berne, Games People Play (New York: Grove, 1964), p. 24.

⁴Eric Berne, Transactional Analysis in Psychotherapy (New York: Grove, 1961), p. 30.

Freudian concepts of superego, ego, and id.

The superego, ego, and id as defined by Freud are regarded as determinants of special characteristics of each type of ego state, but neither the ego states themselves nor the organs that "give rise" to them correspond to the Freudian "agencies." Superego, ego, and id are inferential concepts, while ego states are experiential and social realities.⁵

Structurally, the two systems can be reconciled by regarding superego, ego, and id as determinants in the formation of Parent, Adult, and Child ego states: the Parental ego state being most heavily influenced by the superego, the Adult ego state by the ego, and the Child ego state by the id.⁶

The Parent ego state contains injunctions from authority figures (usually parents) and is solidified by the age of six years. What the young child saw and heard (or thought he saw and heard) from his parents or other parental figures is set in concrete to guide him the rest of his life. These injunctions can be helpful if they are true and appropriate, but can be disadvantageous if the position is based upon untruths, prejudices, or distortions. Since there is often a continuation of important models, and thought patterns that are passed on from one generation to another through early recordings (Parent tapes) one would suspect that some contemporary positions and feelings could be traced to primitive beginnings. Within the Parent ego state are recorded all those techniques and facts as to

⁵Eric Berne, Principles of Group Treatment (New York: Grove, 1966), p. 220.

⁶Ibid., p. 298.

how to get along in the world, the correct way to live and interact, even how to treat one's mate. It is suggested that there is archetypical residue within the Parent ego state that is the source of racial and family habits, attitudes, prejudices, even the family (or tribal) stories that unite the group, keep alive certain beliefs, perpetuate knowledge, continue family ethics, even may dictate the kind of work the family does (e.g., "The Green family goes into medicine, or ministry, or teaching, or farming, or whatever").

To differentiate between the prejudiced Parent and the caring Parent, the terms Critical Parent and Nurturing Parent will be used in this paper. The Critical Parent is concerned about maintaining the habitual modes of thinking, feeling, and interrelating while the Nurturing Parent encourages, supports, and nourishes.

1. The Critical Parent knows who to be threatened by, and who and what to fear, and how to build defenses, both internal and external, the games the family plays, and how to obtain strokes.

2. The Nurturing Parent passes on to posterity the need for empathy, giving strokes, taking care of others including those magical remedies for sickness or catastrophies (e.g., chicken soup for fever, lemon and whisky for colds, and rabbit's foot for good luck).

A "game" is a series of maneuvers by a person to get a payoff or advantage, to avoid intimacy, and in the

process gain some recognition as a person. A "stroke" is a unit of recognition for a person. Strokes can be positive (a pat on the back, compliment), or negative (a kick in the shins, a verbal put-down). The conception of strokes, how strokes are gotten, and the interrelation of people in the process is of primary importance to transactional analysts. Berne states that unless a person obtains strokes his spinal cord will shrivel and he will die.⁷

The Adult ego state is the computer and is the only facet of personality where a person really controls the input. The Parent and the Child come from without, the Adult comes from within. The data of life, the facts, are recorded by the person to be able to set realistic goals, reach the goals, and stay healthy in the process. The Adult is interested in facts, whether they come from experiences or from rationally dealing with data. The Adult, unlike the Parent or the Child is unemotional and is content to live in the world of factual reality. Decisions made while in the Adult ego state are based upon fact, logic, and common sense and usually can be carried through to completion.

The Child ego state is considered the best part of personality as it is the only dimension of a person that can really enjoy life.

⁷Berne, Games People Play, p. 14.

The Child ego state is essentially preserved in its entirety from childhood [italics in the original]. When a man is functioning in this ego mode, he behaves as he did when he was a little boy. It appears that the Child is never more than about seven years old and may be as young as one week or one day. When a person is in the Child state, she sits, stands, walks, and speaks as she did when she was, say, three years old. The childlike behavior is accompanied by the corresponding perceptions, thoughts, and feelings of a three-year old.⁸

Claude Steiner notes that the Child ego state "is the source of spontaneity, sexuality, creative change, and is the mainstream of joy."⁹ He also notes that "the Child is ideally suited where creation is desired--creation of new ideas, procreation, creation of new experiences, recreation, and so on."¹⁰

Berne states the following about the Child ego state:

The Child is in many ways the most valuable aspect of the personality, and if it can find healthy ways of self-expression and enjoyment, it may make the greatest contribution to vitality and happiness.¹¹

[The] Child [is] an ego state which is an archaic relic from an early significant period of life.¹²

Child ego states are relics from the individual's childhood and reproduce his behavior and state of mind at a particular moment or epoch of his development,

⁸Claude Steiner, Scripts People Live (New York: Grove, 1974), p. 28.

⁹Ibid., p. 29.

¹⁰Claude Steiner, Games Alcoholics Play (New York: Grove, 1971), p. 8.

¹¹Berne, The Structure and Dynamics . . ., p. 137.

¹²Berne, Principles of Group Treatment, p. 362.

using, however, the increased facilities at his disposal as a grownup.¹³

Actually the Child is in many ways the most valuable part of the personality, and can contribute to the individual's life exactly what an actual child can contribute to family life: charm, pleasure, and creativity.¹⁴

Thomas A. Harris evaluates what ego states are involved in the religious experience.

It is my opinion that religious experience may be a unique combination of Child (a feeling of intimacy) and Adult (a reflection on ultimacy) with the total exclusion of the Parent. I believe that the total exclusion of the Parent is what happens in *kenosis* [italics in the original], or self-emptying. This self-emptying is a common characteristic of all mystical experiences.¹⁵

I believe the Adult's function in the religious experience is to block out the Parent in order that the Natural Child may reawaken to its own worth and beauty as a part of God's creation.¹⁶

Whether God is experienced by the Child or by the Adult is a fascinating question.¹⁷

Again Berne makes a comparison of an ego state with a Freudian concept for the sake of clarity, as he compares the Child with the id.

. . . Freud describes the id as "a chaos, a seething cauldron of excitement. . . . it has no organization and no unified will . . . nothing which can be compared to negation." The transactional Child

¹³Ibid., p. 220.

¹⁴Berne, Games People Play, pp. 25-26.

¹⁵Thomas A. Harris, I'm O.K.--You're O.K. (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), p. 233.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 234.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 235.

is highly organized, is not necessarily seething, and is quite able to say "No"; and in fact has a strong tendency to do so when this suits his unified will. Thus the Child is a well organized ego state, in contrast to the unorganized cauldron of biological drives which is the id Child and Parent are distinct personalities, each with its own separate and complete organization; they are not necessarily opposed to each other, they are simply in many respects inconsistent which [with] each other. They have a strong psychological and civil reality; from old directories, as already noted, one could find the addresses and telephone numbers of the original child and parent who are perpetuated in the patient as ego states.¹⁸

This is one of the very rare quotations in T.A. literature that suggests the possibility of tracing ego states back to primitive ancestors, "the original child and parent who are perpetuated in the patient as ego states." This concept reinforces the thesis of this paper that not only customs, prejudices, how to do things, even the concept of story telling has ancient beginnings but that the story strikes resonance in the deep subconscious of the person as Psalm 42:7 states it, "Deep calleth unto deep" This is reflected in both the Parent and the Child ego states.

The Child ego state is the part of personality that best listens to and understands the story. The "Once upon a time . . ." are magic words that go right to the Child ("hooks" the Child) and if the person can activate the Child ego state, the psychological message of the story will be received.

¹⁸Berne, Principles of Group Treatment, pp. 297-298.

Some T.A. therapists, to clarify the dynamics involved, dissect the Child ego state into three parts. There is the Adapted or the Obedient Child, that tries to please authority figures. There is the Natural Child or the Sensuous Child, that is spontaneous, open, enthusiastic, who selfishly looks for pleasure. There is the Little Professor, or the Intuitive Child who knows awareness. Other T.A. therapists see the Little Professor's intuitive insights as being in the Natural Child, and thus having only two divisions in the Child, the Natural Child and the Adapted Child.

Either way the ability to size up situations and people, making "seat of the pants" judgments, being intuitive, appreciating a story, are qualities that little children have naturally, and for which grown up "children" have the potential. So often grown-ups lose this quality of life in the preparation for and the business of living. The awareness of what is going on around one's self, including listening to a story, is a beautiful and important part of life and worth doing something to recapture.

Elizabeth E. Sewell sees the need to understand the makeup of personality. "What we need to know is how the imagination thinks. Or to turn it another way, how the human being thinks with his imagination; how he thinks in pictures."¹⁹ Using T.A. we know what ego state is

¹⁹Elizabeth E. Sewell, The New Orpheus, quoted by John D. Crossan, In Parables, the Challenge of the Historical Jesus (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), p. 1.

involved in imagination, sensitivity, intuition, awareness.
This is the Child ego state.

Berne has put this truth in a classical way.

Awareness means the capacity to see a coffeepot and hear the birds sing in one's own way, and not the way one was taught. It may be assumed on good grounds that seeing and hearing have a different quality for infants than for grownups, and that they are more esthetic and less intellectual in the first years of life. A little boy sees and hears birds with delight. Then the "good father" comes along and feels he should "share" the experience and help his son "develop." He says: "That's a jay, and this is a sparrow." The moment the little boy is concerned with which is a jay and which is a sparrow, he can no longer see the birds or hear them sing. He has to see and hear them the way his father wants him to. Father has good reasons on his side, since few people can afford to go through life listening to the birds sing, and the sooner the little boy starts his "education" the better. Maybe he will be an ornithologist when he grows up. A few people, however, can still see and hear in the old way. But most of the members of the human race have lost the capacity to be painters, poets, or musicians, and are not left the option of seeing and hearing directly even if they can afford to; they must get it secondhand. The recovery of this ability is called here "awareness."²⁰

This is the quality of life that seemed to be lacking in people in the first century, as Jesus lamented:

But to what shall I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling to their playmates, "We piped to you and you did not dance: we wailed, and you did not mourn."²¹

Keen and Fox put the same thought in these words:

Children and primitive peoples live in a personalized universe. They experience events as tailor-made to match their needs. Omens, signs, and miracles flash forth from every tree and hilltop: bushes burn and are

²⁰Berne, Games People Play, p. 178.

²¹Matthew 11:16-17 (RSV)

not consumed; birds bring messages from the gods . . . In childhood we all live at the enchanted center of things. We know that chairs trip us when we're angry; we move through the forest and the thicket opens automatically. The world is a conspiracy contrived to delight us. But once we become mature we put away childish notions of magic, abandon the ego-centric perspective, and learn to observe the world with neutral eyes. We are encouraged to filter out the voices that address us in the wind and rain, close off supernatural whisperings in dreams, and become citizens of a universe that is unresponsive to intuitions. We adopt a skepticism that becomes the foundation of what we narrowly identify as reason.²²

Charles A. Reich laments the loss of imagination, creativity, dreams, and personal uniqueness by stating:

. . . Of all the forms of impoverishment that can be seen or felt in America, loss of self, or death in life, is surely the most devastating Beginning with school, if not before, an individual is systematically stripped of his imagination, his creativity, his heritage, his dreams, and his personal uniqueness, in order to style him into a productive unit for mass technological society. Instinct, feeling, and spontaneity are repressed by overwhelming forces.²³

A story or a parable told to a person who is in the Adult or Parent ego state will probably be stripped of the inner or psychological message. In the same way people in the Parent or Adult may miss the real message of a painting, a poem, or a piece of music. They may hear the notes, see the colors, observe the words, they may be able to score them, read them, record them, analyze them, but they might miss the message the artist wanted to convey.

²²Sam Keen and Anne V. Fox, Telling Your Story (New York: New American Library, 1973), pp. 137-138.

²³Charles A. Reich, The Greening of America (New York: Random House, 1970), p. 9.

This is the problem that any storyteller has, including Jesus. Persons in the Parent were critical of his using the parable or story method. Persons in the Adult often requested a logical explanation of his stories. For this reason a storyteller may be tempted to explain what the parts of the story mean. The early church was probably guilty of adding comments and interpretation to his parables, as New Testament scholars testify, thus restricting the original message of the stories.

The "Once upon a time," or "I know a person who was tall, short, good looking," or "Verily, Verily," or "Long ago and far away" are some of the prefaces to the story that are geared to hook or activate the Child. Then the storyteller holds the interest by telling a worthwhile story, using various techniques including variations of tone, voice, picturesque words, dramatic gestures, pantomime, etc. The importance of colors, sizes, textures, sounds, fragrances, touches, tastes cannot be overstressed, for the more avenues that are used to the brain, actually to activate both hemispheres, will heighten the response and deepen the message. Hooking the Child means activating the intuitive and responsive Child ego state.

Several years ago I was impressed with the T.A. model, the many books on the subject, and the numerous classes I attended where the Natural Child ego state was lauded as the "best" dimension of personality, and the only

one that could truly bring enjoyment, awareness, and intimacy. In 1974 I published the book, Free the Child in You, to make application of this insight to many areas of life, especially to the religious experience. I struggled with the thought as to whether the Natural Child was a resource everyone possessed, since some people seemed to have such difficulty in activating it. I came to the conclusion that, like the conscience, the Natural Child is a standard piece of equipment for most people. What is needed is a sensitization and encouragement to reach and fulfill the Natural Child. The Adult must be cathected, to shut the Parent off and give permission for the Child to emerge. The Adult then protects the Child, sets bounds for the Child, and keeps the Parent off its back.

The T.A. therapist stresses that no experience is ever really "forgotten" but still lies in the unconscious. A hypnotist is able to assist the person in recalling "forgotten" material, which lies deep in the unconscious. The storyteller may not understand the psychological dynamics involved in the response to the story but knows what "works." The T.A. therapist knows that much "data" is stored in the unconscious and can be reached if a person were in the right ego state and if the experience can be triggered. For instance, blindfolding a person, and leading him into a bakery should trigger many kinds of past experiences associated with good things to eat (the

Child). In the same way the storyteller can lead a person into an experience by hooking the inner Child of the past.

Having the appropriate ego state to listen to stories was complimented by Jesus when he said "blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear."²⁴ One could also say, "blessed are your eyes when they see, and your ears when they hear," for even the disciples at times lacked the ability to use their Child resources to understand a parable.

The parables had to be "felt" through the dimension of the Natural Child. It was through the senses that they had to be known. The reasoning process (Adult) was able to find some worthwhile materials in the parables, but the real message had to be "seen" and "heard" and "felt" through the Natural Child. Jesus spent much time with the disciples sharing this technique. He revealed this methodology of the kingdom with them. They knew the secret that opened heaven's gates. They and all others who could muster the Natural Child would be additionally blessed. "More would be given to them." But to those who approached the parables through the Adult, and who had been able to receive a little understanding, "even what they had would be taken away," if they could not muster the Natural Child.²⁵

T.A. therapists would be interested in the ego state that the listener brings to the story, but also to the ego state the storyteller is in, for the ego state of the storyteller definitely affects the listener. It would be very difficult for the listener to be in the Natural Child if the teller were coming through in the Critical

²⁴Matthew 13:16 (RSV)

²⁵John K. Bontrager, Free the Child in You (Philadelphia: United Church Press, 1974), pp. 83-84.

Parent, as some teachers habitually do. "Shut up and sit down now and I'm going to tell you a story and you will sit still, be quiet as mice, and listen attentively to every word that comes out of my mouth" will hook the Adapted Child rather than the Natural Child or Little Professor. The little person may obey or she may rebel. Little awareness will take place. In the same way, forcing people to listen to musical programs, visiting the art gallery, ballet, or opera will cause the person to be located someplace in time and space, to be exposed, but the art form will not communicate because the appropriate ego state is not activated. Dragging a person to a football game or some other sporting event may have the same consequences.

The Adult of the storyteller may also have problems with the medium of the story, for this person to say in an unemotional way, "It is time for us to have a story. It will last for five minutes and please sit in an upright position with hands folded in your lap and do not make any sounds as you will not be able to hear my voice." The Adult will stick to the facts, and will probably have problems with those stories that rely upon myth, make-believe, and fantasy. The Adult would probably have difficulty with animals reasoning and carrying on conversations like or with people.

The best ego state for both storyteller and listener is the Natural Child or Little Professor, that

is supervised by the Adult looking over its shoulder. The Natural Child of the teller often gets right through to the Natural Child of the listener. Both of them will be right on target.

T.A. is more than identifying independent ego states but is concerned about how one ego state affects another and which ones are appropriate for the transaction or interaction (called transactional analysis). T.A. is also concerned about game analysis, or the series of transactions or maneuvers to obtain strokes, structure time, to get a payoff, and avoid intimacy.

Another division in T.A. is script analysis, or the understanding of life plans which people formulate early in life and unless one becomes critical of them and changes them she plays the script through to the predictable conclusion. Interest in script analysis and game analysis in this paper will be explained, not as a technique of therapy for which the concepts were originally developed, but as indication of the types of stories told by individuals, families, peoples, and nations, and their effects upon the lives of people.

Berne defines a script as, "an ongoing program, developed in early childhood under parental influence, which directs the individual's behavior in the most important aspects of his life."²⁶ Some important

²⁶Eric Berne, What Do You Say After You Say Hello (New York: Grove, 1972), 418.

statements by T.A. authors concerning the scripting process are as follows:

A person's script will always be based on three questions that involve his identity and destiny: Who am I? What am I doing here? and Who are all those others?²⁷

It is incredible to think, at first, that man's fate, all his nobility and all his degradation, is decided by a child no more than six years old and usually three, but that is what script theory claims.²⁸

By the time he is six . . . he ventures into the great metropolis of the bustling school with whole sets of social responses ready to offer the various kinds of people around him. His mind is all wired up with his own ways of getting along, or at least of surviving, and his life plan has already been made. This was well known to priests and teachers of the Middle Ages, who said: "Give me a child until he is six, and you can have him thereafter." A good kindergarten teacher can even predict what the outcome will be, and what kind of life the child will have: happy or unhappy, winning or losing.

Thus the comedy or tragedy of each human life is that it is planned by an urchin of pre-school age, who has a very limited knowledge of the world and its ways, and whose heart is filled mainly with stuff put there by his parents.²⁹

Scripting takes place by many methods, verbal and nonverbal, conscious and unconscious, but one valuable clue to the scripting process are the stories that are told by one generation to another. T.A. therapists have a special interest in the scripty roles and themes in mythology and children's fairy tales, as these give

²⁷Muriel James and Dorothy Jongeward, Born to Win (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1971), p. 79.

²⁸Berne, What Do You Say . . ., p. 53.

²⁹Ibid., p. 97.

important insights into what script a person had adopted.

A myth is a story which reveals, in symbolic ways, something that is true--not truth that can be proved scientifically--but true in the sense of its basic meaning and universality.

Berne believes that Greek myths contain the script prototypes of contemporary man and can be interpreted psychologically. The mythical figures demonstrate universal types who expressed themselves much as people do today.³⁰

Like ancient myths, a variety of life dramas are popularized in children's stories which are transmitted through books, radio, television, or around the fire-place at family gatherings. An individual's script is often reflected in stories that have the basic manipulative roles as well as the plot in which these roles are acted out.

Fairy-tale Persecutors are often wicked stepmothers, witches, ogres, big bad wolves, dragons, or other beasts. The Victims are frogs, waifs, sleeping beauties, poor little match girls, or ugly ducklings and other kinds of "poor things." The Rescuers are good fairies, helpful elves, wise wizards, beautiful princesses, and handsome princes.³¹

Tracing the script back from one generation to another is a fascinating concept.

Some scripts can be traced back in a clinical interview to the great-grandparents, and if the family has a recorded history, as is often the case with kings and their courtiers, it may go back a thousand years in time. No doubt scripts began when the first manlike creatures appeared on earth, and there is no reason to suspect that their scenes and acts and outcomes were different then than they are now. . . . It is common knowledge, even proverbial, how much grandparents, alive or dead, influence the lives of their grandchildren. . . . Many children at an early age not only want to imitate their forebearers, but would like actually to be their own grandparents.³²

³⁰James and Jongeward, p. 90.

³¹Ibid., p. 92.

³²Berne, What Do You Say . . ., p. 66.

Cultural scripts are often passed by powerful persons in a tribe or family as certain stories are told and re-told. The themes may vary from one group to another, but that the process takes place is without question.

Cultural scripts are the accepted and expected dramatic patterns that occur within a society. They are determined by the spoken and the unspoken assumptions by the majority of the people within that group. Like theatrical scripts, cultural scripts . . . reflect what is thought of as the "national character." The same drama may be repeated generation after generation.

Script themes differ from one culture to another. The script can contain themes of suffering, persecution, and hardship (historically the Jews); it can contain themes of building empires and making conquests (as the Romans once did). Throughout history some nations have acted from a "top dog" position of the conquerer; some from an "underdog" position of the conquered.³³

Margaret Mead describes a New Guinea tribe where men are scripted to be passive and women are scripted to be aggressive. Men are expected to act as nurturing fathers tending the children and living quarters. Women are expected to be aggressive providers. Yet in the United States if a man chooses to keep the home fires burning while the woman brings home the bacon, he is likely to be downgraded in the eyes of society.

In contrast to the New Guinea tribe, a headhunter tribe near Burma scripts the boys from birth for battle and brutality. Each boy rehearses his warrior role daily in preparation for his expected violent death scene. Few men live past their prime; women accept their men's being killed off and share those who are left.³⁴

Stories told even for entertainment purposes can be a powerful influence in shaping the lives of little children. The story methodology is a potent force that can affect the lives of all chronological ages. Scripts

³³James and Jongeward, p. 70.

³⁴Ibid., p. 71.

that are adopted at a very early age guide the persons throughout their lives. The stories that are told from one generation to another perpetuate these scripts.

Deep in the subconscious are stored meaningful experiences and insights that are available for recall and reliving. The storyteller attempts to get a response in this storehouse of rich materials. The story can speak to the needs and understanding of this important facet of personality. T.A. identifies this reservoir as the Child ego state, "the archaeopsyché." The use of vivid activators such as colors, sounds, odors, touches, tastes, word pictures are important to awaken a response within the hearer. The storyteller knows of drama, nonverbal communication, gestures, pantomime, to awaken and heighten interest and response. In this way the message of the story is experienced.

It is assumed that like the conscience, there is the potential for nearly every person to have three ego states. Sometimes one ego state is so dominant that it crowds out others. Sometimes an ego state is intertwined with another causing contamination. Sometimes a person is programmed early in life that one must suppress certain ego states, like the ability to show emotion (e.g., "Men don't cry"). Some persons, because they do not take the time to let the Child come out for joy and pleasure may find it difficult to liberate the Child. Some persons are so intent on being successful that they do not expose certain

ego states that are unproductive. These persons have a "dwarfed" Child and will find it difficult to take time to listen to and experience a story.

But with training, practice, and being given permission, a person can sharpen her awareness and imagination and recapture a child-like spirit that she was robbed of many years before. This is called cathecting the Child. She then will be in a position to experience a story and get the real message the storyteller has for her.

Though the Natural Child (or Little Professor) is the dimension of personality that understands and appreciates the story it is necessary to have Adult supervision of the Child. There always needs to be a "baby-sitter" to oversee the experiences of the Child or else pandemonium may result. Only the Adult can shut up the Parent and give permission for the Child to emerge. It is the Adult that protects the Child from the attacks of the Critical Parent (within and without). It is the Adult that sets limits for the Child. It is the Adult that does resource work to discover beliefs, prejudices, local conditions, in the research and value of stories, but the Child must be awakened to experience the story.

Persons trained in T.A. do not promise that this technique is a magic wand for performing miracles. Berne states, "structural analysis does not pretend to answer all [italics in the original] questions about human behavior."³⁵

Script theory does not pretend that all [*italics in the original*] human behavior is directed by the script. It leaves as much room as possible for autonomy, and indeed, autonomy is the ideal.³⁶

T.A. can be a helpful tool for evaluating the makeup of personality, analyzing relationships, discovering intimacy, and reaching worthwhile goals. It can be a useful device for analyzing the dynamics of the story, which includes the content of the story, the teller, and the listener.

³⁵Berne, What Do You Say . . ., p. 395.

³⁶Ibid., p. 396.

Chapter 3

THE PARABLE AS A TEACHING MODEL

All this Jesus said to the crowds in parables;
indeed he said nothing to them without a parable.¹

The parable is an ancient mode of teaching that has a universal and timeless appeal. The definition of parable seems to be endless as various authors see a spectrum of possibilities in the method. Research in the use of the term parable suggests a wide assortment of meaning, speculations or analogies including simile, metaphor, illustration, allegory, proverb, fable, myth, figure, riddle, example story, comparison, story, and saying. The model of parable is open-ended and full of speculation.

Parable(s):

. . . is a short, simple story, usually of an occurrence of a familiar kind, from which a moral or religious lesson may be drawn.²

. . . is a story or a suggestion concentrated on one point so plain that he who runs may read it.³

¹Matthew 13:34 (RSV)

²Webster's New World Dictionary (Cleveland: Collins and World, 1976)

³Walter Russell Bowie, "The Teaching of Jesus," in The Interpreter's Bible (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1951), VII, 167.

. . . is literally a placing beside or comparison of earthly truths with heavenly truths, or a similitude, an illustration of one subject to another.⁴

. . . is an urgent endeavor on the part of the speaker toward the listener. . . . He wants to affect the other, to win his argument, to influence his judgment in a particular direction, to force him to a decision, to convince him or prevail upon him.⁵

. . . are in various ways elaborated comparisons, [they] . . . are not concerned with what everyone does but narrate a particulate thing in which some person or persons were once involved . . . making the particular credible and probable.⁶

. . . are stories, of course, but of a particular kind--stories that set the familiar in an unfamiliar context, which is also what a metaphor does . . . to give a new insight, and see the ordinary world in an extraordinary way.⁷

. . . is a story which is the polar, or binary, opposite of myth. Parable brings not peace but a sword, and a parable casts fire on earth which receives it.⁸

. . . You can usually recognize a parable because your immediate reaction will be self-contradictory: "I don't know what you mean by that story but I'm certain I don't like it." ⁹

. . . a metaphor of normalcy which intends to

⁴Herbert Lockyear, All the Parables of the Bible (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1963), p. 14.

⁵Eta Linnemann, Jesus of the Parables (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), p. 19.

⁶Dan O. Via, The Parables (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1967), pp. 11-12.

⁷Sallie M. Te Selle, Speaking in Parables (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975), p. 4.

⁸John D. Crossan, The Dark Interval, Toward a Theology of Story (Niles, IL: Argus, 1975), p. 55.

⁹Ibid., p. 56.

create participation in its referent. . . .¹⁰ . . .
 anti-traditional in intention. . . .¹¹

While examples of parable could probably be found wherever there are enquiring and sensitive humans, the parabolic method has had a special appeal to certain people. The parable held:

. . . a special attraction for the peoples of the East, with whom the imagination is quicker and more active than the logical faculty. The great family of nations known as the Semitic, to which the Hebrews, together with the Arabs, the Syrians, the Babylonians, and other remarkable races belong, has shown a particular genius and liking for it.¹²

As the children of Abraham, Christians have been influenced by parables in both the Old and New Testaments, as the parable was adopted and sharpened by Jesus.

The statement by the church about Jesus, that he taught only in parables, sounds like an exaggeration. The teaching of Jesus was passed by word of mouth for several decades after his crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension. The believers thought his return was imminent. When things did not happen as they expected, the sayings of Jesus were written down by the church. The parables which were so graphically remembered, are probably very close to the original method and content of the teaching of Jesus,

¹⁰John D. Crossan, In Parables, the Challenge of the Historical Jesus (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), p. 16.

¹¹Ibid., p. 118.

¹²Principal Salmond, The Parables of Our Lord (Edinburgh: Clark, 1893), quoted by Lockyear, p. 9.

even though the church apparently colored the narratives with additions to the original as well as sometimes making interpretations and adding these to the text. That the people remembered his stories is without question. Jesus had gained a reputation as a storyteller. However, much of the power of the parables may have been lost when they were reduced to the written page, especially when additions and interpretations were added by the church.

There are many merits of parabolic instruction. Herbert Lockyear has succinctly listed some of these unique merits. Parables attract attention and are easily remembered. They stimulate thought, and as such get the hearer involved in the interpretation. The affections and the conscience are affected by parables. They get and hold attention. They speak to the imagination and inner message. Words constantly change their meaning but the language of symbols is abiding.¹³

An excellent illustration of how the church Fathers traditionally interpreted the parables of Jesus was as an elaborate allegory. Augustine's interpretation of the Parable of the Good Samaritan is summarized by C. H. Dodd in The Parables of the Kingdom:

A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho; Adam himself is meant; Jerusalem is the heavenly city of peace, from whose blessedness Adam fell; Jericho means the moon, and signifies our mortality, because it is born, waxes, wanes, and dies. Thieves are the

¹³Lockyear, pp. 17-18.

devil and his angels. Who stripped him, namely of his immortality; and beat him, by persuading him to sin; and left him half-dead, because in so far as man can understand and know God, he lives, but in so far as he is wasted and oppressed by sin, he is dead; he is therefore called half-dead. The priest and Levite who saw him and passed by, signify the priesthood and ministry of the Old Testament, which could profit nothing for salvation. Samaritan means Guardian, and therefore the Lord Himself is signified by this name. The binding of the wounds is the restraint of sin. Oil is the comfort of good hope; wine the exhortation to work with fervent spirit. The beast is the flesh in which He deigned to come to us. The being set upon the beast is belief in the incarnation of Christ. The inn is the Church, where travelers returning to their heavenly country are refreshed after pilgrimage. The morrow is after the resurrection of the Lord. The two pence are either the two precepts of love, or the promise of this life and of that which is to come. The innkeeper is the Apostle (Paul). The supererogatory payment is either his counsel of celibacy, or the fact that he worked with his own hands lest he should be a burden to any of the weaker brethren when the Gospel was new, though it was lawful for him "to live by the Gospel." [italics in the original]¹⁴

This shows how the church and its leaders seem to have misinterpreted and misused the parables of Jesus by forcing them into constricting allegories and illustrations as though pious words and religious jargon could bless these contaminations of his method and message. What a far-cry from the simple and direct approach to truth that the Master Teacher pursued!

In the last several decades there has been an interest in and an enthusiasm about the parables. This

¹⁴C. H. Dodd, The Parables of the Kingdom (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1961), pp. 1-2, quoted by Eugene S. Wehrli, Exploring the Parables (Philadelphia: United Church Press, 1963), pp. 7-8.

movement has returned to the parables with a fresh and objective approach in the attempt to find the historical Jesus and the historical teaching of Jesus. The biblical scholars who have seen the parables of Jesus as "extended metaphors," give them room and let some sunlight and fresh air into the church.

The parable is a prime genre of Scripture and certainly the central form of Jesus' teaching. Current scholarship sees the parable as an extended metaphor, that is, as a story of ordinary people and events which is the context for envisaging and understanding the strange and the extraordinary [italics not in the original]. In the parabolic tradition people are not asked to be "religious" or taken out of this world; rather, the transcendent comes to ordinary reality and disrupts it. The parable sees "religious" matters in "secular" terms. Another way to put this is to speak of Jesus as the parable of God: here we see the distinctive way the transcendent touches the worldly--only in and through and under ordinary life.¹⁵

Jesus' primary method of teaching was parable. His stories were in a secular tone and told of the common things and experiences of life. The parables were taken from the ordinary family and business life of country and village life of Palestine.¹⁶ He did not teach as other teachers, as the people noted. He spoke with authority and not as their scribes. The Temple guard reported to the chief priests that his speech differed from other teachers. Rather than the traditional method of citing a reference and then expounding upon it, Jesus would begin

¹⁵Te Selle, pp. 2-3.

¹⁶Via, pp. 98-99.

by taking common objects or relationships and tell of these.

Even when he was twelve years of age, and he was found in the Temple with the professional teachers, his method and message was direct and simple. Quite unlike a "boy preacher" of today who parrots the religious jargon of his seniors, Jesus gained recognition by his simplicity and directness, by his stories. Only Luke in the Synoptic Gospels has the story of the temple experience. "And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers."¹⁷ The Gospel of Thomas reinforces the Lukian version by saying:

. . . And after the third day they found him in the temple sitting in the midst of the doctors and hearing and asking them questions [italics in the original]. And all men paid heed to him and marvelled how that being a young child he put to silence the elders and teachers of the people, expounding the heads of the law and the parables of the prophets.¹⁸

The Gospel of Thomas states something that I have long suspected, that Jesus even as a boy seemed to have a special sensitivity towards and an attraction for parables. The parables and the stories of the Old Testament as well as those learned in the home and community must have had a great effect upon Jesus, as when he performed his teaching ministry the parabolic method was his medium and message.

¹⁷Luke 2:47 (RSV)

¹⁸Gospel of Thomas xix:2 (c), in M. R. James (tr.), The apocryphal New Testament (Oxford: Clarendon, 1969), p. 54.

His life is even parabolic as Te Selle testifies. What a beautiful concept!

In another place I have written:

The amazement of the temple teachers concerning this twelve-year-old was not that he had an elaborate and complicated theology with all the right "God-words" and phrases, but that in a simple and practical way he expressed great insight into the nature and will of God. Using unsophisticated illustrations and stories, as well as early experiences with nature, people, family, and God, Jesus was able to share these insights with others. Religion was daily living and daily living was religion. Worship was as natural as breathing and eating. Serving God was not escaping from the world but enjoying the world with its goodness and love which God wanted to share with man. The life of Jesus, even at the age of twelve years, was the personalizing of the doxology, "Praise God from whom all blessings flow." It was his Natural Child. When he grew to manhood he rarely lost this approach to life. For this was the quality of life he talked about and lived and offered to share with his contemporaries of every age. Since that time there have been scholars knowledgeable teachers, disciplined martyrs, able philosophers, sensitive humanitarians, prophets, priests, and kings. Perhaps their expertise and their competence exceeded that of the Nazarene. But the ability to live, love, enjoy life, and be an effective member of God's family on earth has never been better personified than in the son of a poor carpenter in Galilee, for Jesus gave of himself and drank deeply from the well of life in the dimension of the Natural Child.¹⁹

Crossan emphasized the point of Gunther Bornkamm that the parables of Jesus are not illustrations but the preaching itself, not an instrument of "the exegesis of an authoritatively prescribed text" but are "the preaching itself and are not merely serving the purpose of a lesson

¹⁹John K. Bontrager, Free the Child in You (Philadelphia: United Church Press, 1974), p. 62.

which is quite independent of them."²⁰ Crossan also sees the poetic quality of parable, and the teller of parables as a poet.

There is no intention in this book of confusing poetry with religion Yet it is becoming increasingly clear that the specific language of religion, that which is closest to its heart, is the language of poetic metaphor in all its varied extension The teacher and the poet go different ways, but if one wishes to insist that Jesus was a teacher one must add that he taught as a poet. . . . The fact that Jesus' experience is articulated in metaphorical parables, and not in some other linguistic types, means, that these expressions are part of that experience itself. This is a most delicate area, for the religious and poetic imagination and creativity have their own mysterious alchemy of generation and transformation There is an intrinsic and unalienable bond between Jesus' experience and Jesus' parables. A sensitivity to the metaphorical language of religious and poetic experience and an empathy with the profound and mysterious linkage of such experience and such expression may help us to understand what is most important about Jesus: his experience of God.²¹

Via sees that the parables, "or at least a substantial portion of them--are genuine works of art, real aesthetic objects."²² Te Selle states:

As in poetic inspiration, the knowledge and its expression come together in a flash--poets, for instance, cannot "say" what they want to say apart from metaphor.²³

. . . metaphor is the poet's way to try and define something for which there is no dictionary meaning. It is his or her attempt to be precise and clear

²⁰Gunther Bornkamm, Jesus of Nazareth (New York: Harper & Row, 1960), quoted by Crossan, In Parables, p. 21.

²¹Crossan, In Parables, pp. 18-22.

²²Via, p. ix.

²³Te Selle, p. 4.

about something for which ordinary language has no way of talking.²⁴

. . . Moreover, if metaphor and symbol are, as Paul Ricoeur says, "food for thought," then they ought to be utilized in just that way--not manipulated, translated, reduced, but contemplated, probed, reflected upon.²⁵

Te Selle then goes on to point out that parable as "extended metaphor" gets the listener or reader involved.

A parable is an extended metaphor--the metaphor is not in discrete images which allow for a flash of insight (a purely aesthetic or intellectual "Aha!"), but it is a way of believing and living that initially seems ordinary, yet is so dislocated and rent from its usual context that, if the parable "works," the spectators become participants, not because they want to necessarily or simply have "gotten the point" but because they have, for the moment, "lost control" or as the hermeneuts say, "been interpreted."²⁶

Eugene Wehrli emphasizes that the parables enter the thought and consciousness of people through the visual imagination.

The power of the parables to arouse insight is achieved through their vivid visual appeal. A parable entices the imagination with a striking word picture. It presents "a truth so substantial [*italics in the original*] that it feeds the imagination and does not merely outline an idea. It was that way of conceiving reality which was always characteristic of the Hebrew mind."²⁷

Linnemann writes of the importance to see the parables in the historical situation where they were told, to reenter the environmental conditions of the first century in order to get a feel for the original message of the parables.

²⁴Ibid., p. 39. ²⁵Ibid., p. 40. ²⁶Ibid., p. 79.

²⁷Wehrli, p. 19.

[The parables of Jesus] . . . need to be grasped in their connection with their original historical situation, for this is precisely how they reveal their meaning, though it reaches far beyond that situation we must . . . postpone the question of what the parables of Jesus say to us, and try to understand the parables as Jesus' listeners heard them. . . . For every attempt to master the parables directly, without this return to the historical situation, only yields a theological utterance or a moral demand. This is, however, not only very much less than, it is something quite different from, the original meaning of the parables of Jesus.²⁸

In addition, one must search for the historical Jesus, as church traditions and teachings have contaminated the Jesus of history, and Jesus the teller of parables. Crossan gives five methodological principles that can be used in the search for the historical Jesus and the historical parables of Jesus. (1) The gospels contain variations of interpretative restatements. Even Mark's account is not original or pure from contamination. (2) Due to the lack of any definite saying on which to pass judgments regarding the test for historicity and authenticity of a parable the interpreter must deliberately "bracket" his decisions. (3) The interpreter must also retrace in successive steps of development the historical transmission of the subject matter. (4) The earliest form must then be appraised of historical authenticity for Jesus. A close evaluation of modifications and reinterpretations from the primitive church "to separate what Jesus said or did from the traditional records of his words and deeds." The

²⁸Linnemann, pp. 33-34.

interpreter will retrace the original saying, back toward Judaism, in the usage of the earliest Jewish Christianity itself. (5) "This 'criterion of dissimilarity' just invoked will apply not only to subject and content but even more especially to style and to form."²⁹

Society's image of man colors what is said about him, his condition, his plight, his hope or lack of hope, his victory or defeat.

. . . [Preston] Roberts has identified three different motifs, each combining plot and symbolism in a unity, which present three different views of what man's possibilities are. We may summarize:

(a) The tragic (classical) image of man is that of a noble figure flawed by finite ignorance and/or hybis moving without freedom from good to bad fortune and to an end "after which there is nothing." In his recognition scene he comes to the bitter knowledge that he has accomplished the opposite of his intentions, and "he accuses the very character of life and history" or his own unalterable essence.

(b) The modern image of man is that of a more or less abnormal figure--a victim of psychological, sociological, or comic forces--moving without freedom from a bad to a worse situation and to an end after which there is nothing. In the recognition scene--if he is capable of recognizing anything--he is aware of the loneliness and misery of his life and accuses the nature of life and history.

(c) The Christian image of man is that of a more or less normal figure flawed by idolatry and pretension moving with limited but real freedom from a bad to a good situation and to an ending which is a new beginning, even if it is life found in death. In the recognition scene he is aware of guilt, judgment and forgiveness and accuses himself, but a contingent, forgivable self, not an unalterable essence.³⁰

²⁹Crossan, In Parables, pp. 4-5.

³⁰Preston Roberts, "A Christian Theory of Dramatic Tragedy," Journal of Religion, quoted by Via, pp. 102-103.

Via sees Roberts setting forth as the Christian motif what is "really a comic or redemptive movement." He agrees with others that "a Christian literary interpretation should present a resolution of man's existential predicament."³¹ This model by Roberts is seen as helpful in understanding and interpreting the parables, as the parables do bring out the existential predicament of man in a graphic way. Te Selle sees the parables as the means to understand man's existence, his relationships in the world including his relationship with God, and thus to formulate his life plan and theology.

The purpose of theology is to make it possible for the gospel to be heard in our time The assumption of the present book is that theology could better fulfill this function were it to attend to Jesus' parables as models of theological reflection, for the parables keep "in solution" the language, belief, and life we are called to, and hence they address people totally There is a way to do theology . . . that one could call mediary or parabolic theology, theology which relies on various literary forms--parables, stories, poems, confessions--as a way from religious experience to systematic theology.³²

Crossan also sees the parables as the beginning to theology.

. . . Parables give God room. The parables of Jesus are not historical allegories telling us how God acts with mankind; neither are they moral example-stories telling us how to act before God and towards another. They are stories which shatter the deep structure of our accepted world and thereby render clear and evident to us the relativity of the story itself. They remove our defences and make us vulnerable to God. It is only in such experiences that God can touch us, and only in such moments

³¹Ibid., p. 103.

³²Te Selle, pp. 1-2.

does the kingdom of God arrive. My own term for this relationship is transcendence.³³

Te Selle speculates about theologians turning to poetic metaphor, and what the results would be. In talking about poetic metaphor she also speaks about parabolic metaphor.

If theologians would turn to poetry--both ancient and modern-- . . . we might speculate on the kind of theology which would emerge. It would be mystical, religious, didactic, discursive, or explanatory. It would be sensuous, secular, suggestive, personal, participatory. It would not abjure ambiguity or fear irreverence or humor. It would realize that there is no "direct" way to talk about God It would, with Elizabeth Sewall, realize that all our talk, including talk about God, is "anthropomorphic" and not be afraid of such direction and limitation. It would, perhaps, learn two things from poetic metaphor --to associate when possible ("I caught this morning morning's minion") and to juxtapose when necessary ("They hung him in Jerusalem/and in Hiroshima")--and to be sensitive enough to know the difference.³⁴

The parables as well as other parts of the scriptures, have often been interpreted literally, thus turning them into models for morality, theology, or even life in general. To read the parables honestly as well as historically should point out the inadequacy of them becoming examples to follow. An employer who attempts to negotiate labor relations using the teachings of the Parable of the Laborers in the Vineyard (Matthew 20:1-16) will be labeled as "unfair" to the labor market and rightly so. The farmer who uses the farming methods found in the Parable of the

³³Crossan, The Dark Interval, pp. 121-122.

³⁴Te Selle, pp. 114-115.

Sower (Matthew 13:1-8) will probably go hungry.

A representative of a company who follows the literal directions of the Parable of the Dishonest Steward (Luke 16:1-8) will probably face some ethics committee and end up in jail. The housekeeping methods of the Parable of the Lost Coins (Luke 15:8-10) are not adequate for modern living. The first aid procedures performed following an accident on a highway would probably be rewarded today by a malpractice suit of practicing medicine without a license by the AMA and also hailed into court by the family of the victim (Parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:29-37). Buying a farm to uncover a known buried treasure is of questionable moral practice as it would be for a merchant to "sell all that he has" to possess a pearl (Parable of the Hidden Treasure, Matthew 13:44, Parable of the Pearl of Great Price, Matthew 13:45-46). No matter how valuable the pearl may be, the merchant probably would be immediately sued for divorce in contemporary society by a wife who claims she has no household money to buy groceries and pay the rent.

Taking the theology of the parables literally is apt to produce a conception of God that is fickle yet unbending, doing things for the sake of expediency, capriciously fluctuating from being ultra-critical, to being pampering and over-indulgent, representing questionable ways of dealing with persons, nature, and things.

Turning the parables into allegory also distorts

their original mission and message. Not only did the early church fathers allegorize the parables, but this method is a popular approach by modern interpreters who claim that they alone have the insights, ability, and understanding to analyze and teach the true message of the parables. The problem is further complicated in that even those who recognize the dangers and distortions of allegorizing the parables, in the end sometimes draw their own allegories from them.

The scriptures at times tell of Jesus turning the parables into allegories when he was questioned about their meaning. This could be the addition of the early church as the parables were told and retold verbally for decades before being reduced to writing. It could have been the desire of the translators and copyists who found it difficult to let a parable speak for itself. It may have been that when the parables were first given by Jesus and the people did not grasp their impact he turned them into allegories as training aids. Or, it could have been that some times Jesus, in rare circumstances, intended to allegorize.

Wehrli states the following about the parable and allegory:

. . . While a parable is an appeal to responsiveness and intelligibility, an allegory can be understood only by those in possession of the key to its system or symbolism. An allegory embodies teaching to be accepted on grounds other than face value, while a parable has the characteristics of an argument laying claim to the insight of the hearer and seeking application to the

situation at hand.³⁵

Crossan, in his book, In Parables, elaborates on the method of allegory.

. . . an allegory . . . [is] a story in figurative language whose several points refer individually and collectively to some other event which is both concealed and revealed in the narration.³⁶

Hence a parable could be taken to mean allegory. But Crossan states that at the end of the last century Adolf Julicher challenged this:

. . . and claimed that Jesus' stories were not allegories with many separate but connected references but were parables with one main point incarnating some very general religious and ethical truth.³⁷

But, both parts of this statement by Julicher are now questioned and seen to be inaccurate.

If each parable contained only one central point this was to be interpreted not in terms of general religious truth but in the very specific terms of Jesus' own historical situation and eschatological message.³⁸

New ways of looking at parable, other than allegory, were developed. New theories of parable were made. Some writers state that parable contains "one major point," whereas allegory has many "separate but connected points of references," being each end of a spectrum. Crossan states that this is an inadequate understanding and explanation of parable.

³⁵Wehrli, pp. 6-7.

³⁶Crossan, In Parables, p. 8.

³⁷Ibid., p. 8.

³⁸Ibid., p. 8.

The suspicion is heightened when one recalls the insistence with which some of our greatest poets have stressed the tremendous differences between allegory and symbol and when one contrasts this with the presumed combination of allegory and symbol in Jesus' parables. . . . Goethe expressed the distinction of allegory and symbol in terms of expressing the inexpressible . . . in Yeats; "Symbolism said things which could not be said so perfectly in any other way, and needed but a right instinct for its understanding; while allegory said things which could be said as well, or better, in another way and needed a right knowledge for its understanding." . . . On the other hand, the poet Coleridge emphasizes the symbol's participation in its referent as the heart of the heart of the distinction: "An allegory is but a translation of abstract notions into a picture language, which is itself nothing but an abstraction from objects of the senses On the other hand a symbol . . . is characterized by the translucence of the special in the individual, or of the general in the special, or of the universal in the general. . . .

Much of the same sort of difference is noted by Eliot in contrasting Charles Williams and Chesterton: "Chesterton's *The Man Who Was Thursday* is an allegory: it has a meaning which is meant to be discovered at the end; while we enjoy it in reading, simply because of the swiftly moving plot and the periodic surprises, it is intended to convey a definite moral and religious point expressible in intellectual terms. It gives you ideas, rather than feelings Williams has no such 'palpable design' upon his readers. His aim is to make you partake of a kind of experience that he has had, rather than to make you accept some dogmatic belief."³⁹

The teller of stories or parables wants to share an experience, and involve the listener in the experience. The storyteller wants to share a feeling rather than present an idea, he is interested in faith and not in dogma. The ordinary language of science, which is logical, descriptive, and systematic has a place in the background study of the scriptures including the parables. This understanding is

³⁹Ibid., pp. 9-10.

necessary to set the stage for the understanding of parable. But, the ordinary language which deals with exactness can neither understand nor explain questions of ethics, values, and ultimate meanings. Crossan states that these are known only through "mystical intuition." The parable is an excellent medium for conveying this truth.

. . . Christian language must always be ordinary, contemporary, and imagistic as it is in the parables; Christian belief must always be a process of coming to belief--like a story--through the ordinary details of historical life Christian life must always be the bold attempt to put the words and belief into practice. . . .

A theology that takes its cues from the parables finds that the genres most closely associated with it are the poem, the novel, and the autobiography, since these genres manifest the ways metaphor operates in language, belief, and life.⁴⁰

Thus Te Selle sees the story or parable as being an important medium for expressing the Christian faith. Continuing, she writes:

The story is a form very close indeed to our primary form, the parable, and its importance for Christianity can scarcely be overstated. . . . The gospel was identified not with a teaching or a "religious" experience but with an action or history played out in the particular stories of individuals. The stress is action over against teaching Or rather we might say, the stress is on experience of coming to belief, the action the individual takes in response to an action on his or her behalf by God.⁴¹

Crossan states that the parables are not just stories but "story events."

⁴⁰Te Selle, p. 3.

⁴¹Ibid., pp. 119-121.

It is clear that parable is really a story event and not just a story. One can tell oneself stories but not parables. One cannot really do so just as one cannot really beat oneself at chess or fool oneself completely with a riddle one has just invented. It takes two to parable.⁴²

So often in the parables, as in drama on the stage or in real life, there is a reversal, or a switch. This produces a "shock" value in the listener or reader, to shock him out of his complacency and security. The parables are excellent examples of the truth in Isaiah 55:8, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, says the Lord."

Whose standards are being used? Whose rule book is being followed? Whose goals are the final goals? Whose will is being sought? So often people take for granted that collective thinking on a subject is automatically God's purpose and direction. So often people claim as divine, their own direction, values, and philosophies. To make people face the facts of Isaiah 55:8 the parabolic method is an effective way to shock people to the reality of life and faith.

We are confronted . . . in the Treasure parable, with a man whose normalcy of past-present-future is rudely but happily shattered. The future he had presumably planned and projected for himself is totally invalidated by the advent of the Treasure which opens up a new world and unforeseen possibilities. In the force of this advent he willingly reverses his past, quite rightly and wisely he sells "all that he has." And from this advent and this reversal he obtains the Treasure which now dictates his time and

⁴²Crossan, The Dark Interval, p. 87.

words. It gives him a new world of life and action he did not have before and he could not have programmed for himself. One feels that the Paul who wrote of his conversion in Galatians 1.16-18 would absolutely understand such a temporality and would even find its structure mirrored geographically in his own sequence of place: Damascus-Arabia-Jerusalem.⁴³

The hero in the parable is often the outcast in real life; the model of virtue in real life is often the fall guy of the parable. In the Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:30 ff.), the reject of society or the Samaritan is the hero, whereas the actions of the priest and Levite are suspect. In the Parable of the Pharisee and the Publican (Luke 18:9 ff.), the pious Pharisee comes in second, beaten out by a "known sinner." Other reversals are the rich man is overshadowed by Lazarus, the first-seated guests preempted by the last seated, the invited guests replaced by the uninvited guests, the dutiful son forced to the shadows by the prodigal son. These and other reverses make a person face the issues including his prejudices and positions. He cannot remain aloof, indifferent, or plead ignorance. He is forced to a decision. He must assess where he is, mentally, spiritually, and morally in relation to the truth of the parable. These are "dramatic encounters" where there are elements of "surprise and shock" as Via sees it.

Crossan quotes Ernst Kasemann's remark about what Jesus and Paul fought against, was:

⁴³Crossan, In Parables, p. 34.

. . . the community of "good" people which turns God's promises into their own privileges and God's commandments into the instruments of self-sanctification.⁴⁴

Crossan states that neither stupidity nor hypocrisy was the culprit, "but sincerity all too sincere and perfection all too perfect" were to blame. The parables go directly to these issues and force people to face them. Many of the parables:

. . . shatter the complacency of one's world in the name of the Kingdom's advent. . . . one must be ready and willing to respond in life and action to the eschatological advent of God. But, unfortunately, the eschatological advent of God will always be precisely that for which wise and prudent readiness is impossible because it shatters also our wisdom and our prudence.⁴⁵

Te Selle states that:

. . . Jesus, as the parable of God, did not tell people about the kingdom but he was the kingdom; and the way his whole life brought people to the kingdom was through a juxtaposition of the ordinary within a startling new context.⁴⁶

The parables of Jesus produce a response called hermeneutic, and is through "imaginative participation."

It is coming to a moment of insight when one's ordinary situation is seen in a new setting, a startling setting (called "the coming of the kingdom" in the New Testament).⁴⁷

Parables are not "primarily concerned with knowing

⁴⁴Ernst Kasemann, Perspectives on Paul (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971), quoted by Crossan, In Parables, p. 81.

⁴⁵Crossan, In Parables, pp. 119-120.

⁴⁶Te Selle, p. 82. ⁴⁷Ibid., p. 83.

but with doing," as Sallie Te Selle comments. The Christian faith is seen, not in beliefs or doctrines, but in "believing" which is more closely related to story than doctrine.

Via emphasized the everyday situations as the meetingplace between God and persons, where life is seen to have meaning and value.

No figure or action in the parables do tell us what God is like, but the parables do tell us that God meets us and we are in touch with him in the everyday and that when we respond to him our existence is structured like that of the prodigal son and not like that of the unforgiving servant. In the parables "God and the world come together" showing life in the world to be meaningful. The very fact that Jesus compared the kingdom of God to ordinary, everyday people and activities suggests some kind of analogy between God and man.⁴⁸

It has been my experience in discussing the parables in church related groups that people avoid the point of the parable, even when it seems to be quite obvious, and want to turn them into models of theological or ethical teaching. For instance, to read the Parable of the Hidden Treasure (Matthew 13:44) where the point is an irrational betting one's life, a "shooting the works," groups have consistently wanted to discuss whether it was ethical for a person to buy and possess a field under these conditions. People are uncomfortable with open-ended teaching. They want their faith to be tied in neat packages built upon proof-texts. The parables as part of the scriptures are

⁴⁸Via, p. 104.

often used to document positions. People constantly request the explanation for a certain parable.

The parables of Jesus seek to draw one into the Kingdom and they challenge us to act and live from the gift which is experienced therein. But we do not want the parables. We want precepts and we want programs. We want good precepts and we want sensible programs. We are frightened by the lonely silences within the parables. . . . They make us face the problems of the grounding of ethics and we want only to discuss the logic of ethics.⁴⁹

Jesus directly and indirectly taught about the Kingdom of God. He told people to pray for its coming (Matthew 6:10), to seek it (Matthew 6:33), to recognize it (Matthew 3:2), to enter it (Matthew 7:21), to inherit it (Matthew 25:34), to receive it (Luke 18:17), He also implied that the experience of the Kingdom could be lost by carelessness (Matthew 21:43). The Kingdom was not some far-off prize to be claimed at death, but a present reality that must be valued, sought, recognized, and accepted. ". . . for behold, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you" (Luke 17:21). It was and is a present reality that must be experienced in the here and now. It is not to be thought of in terms of harps and golden streets but in the language and symbols of the commonplace, even the mundane. But it is a quality of experience that God gives as a gift. This is one reason why the parables were such a powerful vehicle to carry the message of the Kingdom; they spoke of the commonplace, but in a new

⁴⁹Crossan, In Parables, p. 82.

light. God being incarnate in the world, challenging the world, and shattering complacency. Prior values are overturned, new options are seen, old judgments reversed, and established conclusions superceded.

This example [the seating arrangements at the wedding feast] of situational reversal shows how the Kingdom arrives so that one experiences God's rule as that which turns one's world upside down and radically reverses the normalcy. The Kingdom is not one's ultimate concern but that which undermines one's ultimate concern.⁵⁰

The parables were expected to be understood, and to have an effect on the people in regard to experiencing the Kingdom of God. Via states that, "Jesus intended the parables should have positive results, that the people should hear with understanding."⁵¹

Jesus did not come to set out a series of moral generalities but to proclaim an eschatological crisis, and this crisis gave to his ministry the character of conflict. The proper interpretation of the parables is the one which reflects in a very particular way Jesus' eschatological message and the conflict of his ministry, and the meaning in the parables must be congruous with Jesus' non-parabolic teaching.⁵²

The parable as a teaching model has its roots in antiquity, but the method is also contemporary, for it speaks to the needs of humans in all periods of time. So often the church has misrepresented Jesus and contaminated his message in parable by constricting the interpretation to allegory or literalism. For centuries this

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 70

⁵¹Via, p. 9.

⁵²Ibid., p. 18.

misuse of the parable was unquestioned, but in recent decades there has been a search for the historical Jesus and the historical message of Jesus as contained in parable.

The parables of Jesus were in a secular tone and told of common things and experiences. The message is to be found within the parable and not interpreted from the outside by any key or clue. The parables do arrest attention, and speak to something deep within personality. "But a parable which has to be explained is, like a joke in similar circumstances, a parable which has been ruined as parable [italics in the original]." ⁵³

A theology that is based upon parable does not constrict God nor handicap man, but opens new vistas of insights and relationships. While being neither moral examples nor theological models, it shatters our commonly held beliefs and goals, removes our defenses, and makes us vulnerable to God. The parable is cast in the commonplace, in the secular and mundane world models. As such it finds resonance in those who are at home in the world.

⁵³Crossan, The Dark Interval, p. 102.

Chapter 4

THE STORY SERMON AS PARABLE

We love stories then because our lives are stories.¹

As was developed in Chapter 3, there can be a myriad of interpretations and potentials within the teaching model called parable, ranging from allegory to metaphor, from a controlled interpretation to an open-ended possibility. The parable is an ancient form of communication that has great potential for modern times. All the shades of interpretation concerning the meaning of parable, all the possibilities as well as the shortcomings of the method of parable, these points can be and need to be applied directly to the story and thus to the story sermon.

This project is primarily interested in the story sermon only as "story," although this is just one viewpoint concerning the mission and message of the story sermon within the church today. What happens in a worship service when the minister "takes a break" in the service to talk to the children covers a multitude of philosophies, techniques, and goals. Some of the topical descriptions in the order

¹Sallie Te Selle, Speaking in Parables (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975), p. 138.

of worship in the church bulletin will give some clue as to what the minister and lay people expect to happen during this break in the action of the service.

Even when the grownups and children expect to hear a "story," just how that story is planned, prefaced, told, and applied has much to say about the expectations of all involved. For instance, it is commonly expected that every story sermon should have a moral.

To add interest and better to strike home with a moral, a children's sermon should be specific in identifying faults or virtues. Do not merely say, "Sonny is a gossip," but say, "Sonny said, 'Joe has a big, fat mother.'" Do not say, "Sonny gave money to benevolences," but say, "Sonny gave his fifty cents to help a little boy in India learn to love Jesus." Do not say, "The children were always fighting," but say, "Sally ran to Mother yelling, 'Mommy, Sonny is spitting on me!'"

It will be helpful, in preparing children's sermons, to keep a record of the actual good and bad deeds that one knows.²

This material is quoted in the chapter entitled "Story Sermons," where the author uses the term "Children's Sermon" as synonymous with "Story Sermon." The material throughout the book (which is in its seventh printing) sees these "messages" to children alone. He states that the speaker should not talk down to the children, should be talking about things that children actually do, be adaptable to the understanding of a child, center the messages around a mental picture of an object that is

²Luther Cross, Object Lessons for Children (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1967), p. 80.

captivating to the imagination, but always include a moral.

"One should avoid the story-sermon that uses a moral of vague relationship to the story."³ One is directed to always have a moral and stick to the moral that comes out of the story. This is the primary reason for having messages to children. We are told that to tell a story that has no moral, or that the moral is vague, is indeed a waste of time, apt to be misinterpreted and misunderstood, and really unworthy of a Christian pulpit. This sounds like the uneducated preacher who said the following about his preaching, "I tell them what I want to say, then I tell them what I say, then I tell them what I just said." There can be not doubt that under these controlled conditions a directed message will come through, and in the children's sermon the moral will be as obvious as the sails on a sailboat, or the sound of church bells on a crisp morning.

Aesop's Fables have long held an attraction to people, including myself. Although I do not recall one situation in my childhood when I either read or had read to me the fables of Aesop. But that these mythical stories have had an effect upon my life is without question. Evidently I was saturated with the method and teaching of Aesop when I was very young. I love these stories but for many years I have resented the moral that is always

³Ibid.

tacked on at the end.

Aesop lived many centuries before the birth of Christ and it is possible that his stories influenced Jesus. There are some similarities between these two storytellers. Both saw the story as a mirror of self-examination. The stories of both have been moralized by those who have come in contact with them, and the morals were then added to the stories. The stories of both have had a dramatic effect upon generations of people in the world.

If we dispense with the morals [of Aesop], which are little more than an insult to our intelligence, how are we to understand the existence of such a collection of tales? If these fables were not intended to serve a moral and instructional purpose, were they brought together to serve any other purpose? The answer to this question is not, perhaps, too difficult to divine, for we know something of the place the fables occupy in our own consciousness. Pointed stories capable of a wide range of application have always been in demand. We have only to recall fishing in muddy waters, out of the frying pan into the fire, the goose that laid the golden eggs, the dog in the manger, the boy who cried wolf, the ant and the grasshopper, the hare and the tortoise, and the wolf in sheep's clothing [italics in the original] to realize the proverbial and paradigmatic function the stories serve with us.⁴

Far from being highly moral stories, the fables are not always even conducive to moralizing. The fable of The Boys and the Butcher (66) presents two juvenile delinquents of antiquity stealing from a butcher. The point of the story lies in the boy who stole the meat saying he didn't have it and the one who had it saying he hadn't stolen it. The butcher's remark that even if they deceive him with their lies, they will not deceive the gods, is very lame indeed. Again in the story of The Bat and

⁴Lloyd W. Daly, Aesop Without Morals (New York: Yoseloff, 1961), p. 12.

the Weasels (172), in which the bat escaped death at the hands of weasles once by claiming to be a mouse instead of a bird and again by claiming to be a bird instead of a mouse, there is no moral content, and even the moralist can only say, "Obviously, we too must not always stand on the same ground but remember that people who adapt themselves to circumstances often manage to escape the most serious perils."⁵

It is not so much that the morals following the fables do not seem to fit (and often they do not), or sometimes appear as an appendage or afterthought. The heavy emphasis upon having a concrete, clear, concise moral at the end of a beautiful story sometimes actually detracts from the story. I was once pleased to find a translation of Aesop's fables where the stories were printed and allowed to stand on their own merit. The only morals that can be found are printed in the appendix, and a person has to want to search there to find the "canned" moral. Upon closer examination of the library copy of the above book I found that some reader had penciled in the moral at the conclusion of some of the stories!

In a typical "story sermon" which may also go by a different name, the resource books stress that there must be a moral, that the moral must come out of the story, and that the moral must be applied directly to the experience of children. The motivation for having a part of a worship service set apart for the children

⁵Ibid., p. 17.

by these leaders of worship seems to be to ascertain what "sins" or virtues the children have and then build the "message" around these, so that:

. . . after a children's sermon, a parent is able to say to a child, "See, the minister was talking about you this morning," it is an indication that the talk was appropriate.⁶

This is a limited, distorted, unkind and gross misrepresentation of the method of story as used by Jesus or Aesop.

In addition to the designation "Children's Sermon," other references are used which are giveaways as to what grownups expect to happen during that part of the service: "Children's Message," "Junior Sermon," "Object Lesson," "Mini-Sermon," "Sermonette," "Chapel Talks," "Talks to Children," "Object Talks," "Object Sermon." All these seem to be on the side of authority, directness, control in regard to method, theology, and morality. They begin from some real or imagined weakness or virtue and they are expected to shore up the weakness or perfection in children and help them find and stay on the right track. All kinds of props are used to arouse and hold interest, including live animals, old shoes, slight of hand, chemicals that change the colors of liquids, and so on.

These attempts to minister to children are usually couched in grownup concepts and theological jargon,

⁶Cross, p. 79.

camouflaged by informality and chumminess, with a big fuss that now we are doing something great for the children. The children are seen, not as the beautiful examples of intuitiveness, awareness, openness, spontaneity, and hence close to the Kingdom of God (as Jesus said we should become as little children to receive the Kingdom of God), but as miniature adults, sinners, in need of salvation. Serious subjects such as sin, salvation, heaven, hell, goodness, badness must be faced.

Those who define story as parable, and parable as allegory are comfortable with the structured story, with a structured interpretation, which always includes a moral. This method gives little room for the intuitiveness and awareness of children and adults.

For those who see the parable as open-ended, and people as possessing the desire and the ability to "experience" truth, the story sermon as "story" becomes a unique and effective way of conveying meaningful relations between persons and between persons and God. The parable or story as allegory is often the way of perpetuating commonly held positions and beliefs, reinforcing what one already has accepted. The parable or story as extended metaphor often shatters the traditional and customary, and forces people to see that God's ways are not man's ways, and that man does not think like God. The parable as metaphor removes our defenses and makes us vulnerable to the Spirit of God, the truth of God, and the Grace of God.

Parabolic metaphor gives man and God "room."

I dislike the "Sermon" part of the "Story Sermon" as this often encourages theologizing and moralizing. "Sermon" also implies preaching, and a story's or parable's primary function is neither preaching nor illustration. Parables or stories can be the basis of textual or expository preaching; parables or stories can be used as illustrative materials in preaching, but these are secondary, or inadequate ways they may be used.

If the term "Story Sermon" has such negative overtones, what then would be a better designation for the use of the story in worship? Perhaps to call this basic method simply "A Story," or "A Modern Parable," or even "A Contemporary Parable" would be more accurate, and hence more helpful to both the storyteller as well as the listener. In this paper, the term "Story Sermon" means "A Modern Parable" or "A Contemporary Parable."

The story as parable is able to speak about religious experience in a way that ordinary language cannot. Closely akin to poetic metaphor, the story as parabolic metaphor can speak to the hungers, longings, and feelings that lie deeply within the subconscious of personality. Stories as parables help people become involved in an experience, rather than making a response to some dogmatic or even a rational statement. Stories as parables are experience and belief in action. Stories as parables arouse attention, awaken conscience, confront

the truth, force a decision. The story in worship as a contemporary parable, can accomplish what the sermon is quite unable to do, to arouse insights and awareness, feed the imagination through participation and involvement, awaken primal feelings, speak to the total person, and share in an open-ended experience.

As there are many types and themes in parables, as well as various truths and feelings that can be experienced, so it is with the story sermon. The remainder of this section will illustrate the story sermon as parabolic metaphor to show the variety and potential within this model.

"The Parable of the Eagle," is an excellent illustration of the power of a story, with the message and the experience turned over to the reader or listener, where she becomes involved in the details and outcome of the story. The story is from West Africa, and has a timeless and universal appeal.

"The Parable of the Eagle"

James Aggrey

A certain man went through a forest seeking any bird of interest he might find. He caught a young eagle, brought it home and put it among his fowls and ducks and turkeys, and gave it chickens' food to eat even though it was an eagle, the king of birds.

Five years later a naturalist came to see him and, after passing through his garden, said: "That bird is an eagle, not a chicken."

"Yes," said its owner, "but I have trained it to be a chicken. It is no longer an eagle, it is a chicken, even though it measures fifteen feet from

tip to tip of its wings."

"No," said the naturalist, "it is an eagle still: it has the heart of an eagle, and I will make it soar high up to the heavens."

"No," said the owner, "it is a chicken, and it will never fly."

They agreed to test it. The naturalist picked up the eagle, held it up, and said with great intensity: "Eagle, thou art an eagle; thou dost belong to the sky and not to this earth; stretch forth thy wings and fly." The eagle turned this way and that, and then, looking down, saw the chickens eating their food, and down he jumped.

The owner said: "I told you it was a chicken."

"No," said the naturalist, "it is an eagle. Give it another chance to-morrow."

So the next day he took it to the top of the house and said: "Eagle, thou art an eagle; stretch forth thy wings and fly." But again the eagle, seeing the chickens feeding, jumped down and fed with them.

The owner said: "I told you it was a chicken."

"No," asserted the naturalist, "It is an eagle, and it still has the heart of an eagle; only give it one more chance, and I will make it fly to-morrow."

The next morning he rose early and took the eagle outside the city, away from the houses, to the foot of a high mountain. The sun was just rising, gilding the top of the mountain with gold, and every crag was glistening in the joy of that beautiful morning. He picked up the eagle and said to it: "Eagle, thou art an eagle; thou dost belong to the sky and not to this earth; stretch forth thy wings and fly!"

The eagle looked around and trembled as if new life were coming to it; but it did not fly. The naturalist then made it look straight at the sun. Suddenly it stretched out its wings and, with the screech of an eagle, it mounted higher and higher and never returned. It was an eagle, though it had been kept and tamed as a chicken.⁷

The following biographical story told by Sam Keen about his relationship with his father has deep theological and moral overtones, though God's name is mentioned only one time, and there are no direct ethical statements.

⁷James Aggrey, "The Parable of the Eagle," in Peggy Rutherford (ed.), African Voices, An Anthology of Native African Writing (New York: Vanguard, 1958), pp. 165-166.

"Reflections On A Peach Seed Monkey"

Sam Keen

Once upon a time when there were still Indians, Gypsies, bears, and bad men in the woods of Tennessee where I played and, more important still, there was no death, a promise was made to me. One endless summer afternoon my father sat in the eternal shade of a peach tree, carving on a seed he had picked up. With increasing excitement and covetousness I watched while, using a skill common to all omnipotent creators, he fashioned a small monkey out of the seed. All of my vagrant wishes and desires disciplined themselves and came to focus on that peach-seed monkey. If only I could have it, I would possess a treasure which could not be matched in the whole cosmopolitan town of Maryville! What status, what identity, I would achieve by owning such a curio! Finally I marshaled my nerve and asked if I might have the monkey when it was finished (on the sixth day of creation). My father replied, "This one is for your mother, but I will carve you one some-day."

Days passed, and then weeks and finally, years, and the some-day on which I was to receive the monkey did not arrive. In truth, I forgot all about the peach-seed monkey. Life in the ambience of my father was exciting, secure, and colorful. He did all of those things for his children a father can do, not the least of which was merely delighting in their existence. One of the lasting tokens I retained of the measure of his dignity and courage was the manner in which, with emphysema sapping his energy and eroding his future, he continued to wonder, to struggle, and to grow. In the pure air and dry heat of an Arizona afternoon on the summer before the death of God, my father and I sat under a juniper tree. I listened as he wrestled with the task of taking the measure of his success and failure in life. There came a moment of silence that cried out for testimony. Suddenly I remembered the peach-seed monkey, and I heard the right words coming from myself to fill the silence: "In all that is important you have never failed me. With one exception, you kept the promises you made to me--you never carved me that peach-seed monkey."

Not long after this conversation I received a small package in the mail. In it was a peach-seed monkey and a note which said: "Here is the monkey I promised you. You will notice that I broke one leg and had to repair it with glue. I am sorry I didn't have time to carve a perfect one."

Two weeks later my father died. He died only at

the end of his life⁸

One of the most powerful stories I have ever heard is entitled, "Resurrection, Ode on a Burning Tank," by Kenneth E. Bailey. It is told as a modern parable and its colorful terminology and vivid visual images are those of parabolic metaphor as told by a poet. The story has the capacity of bringing both the teller and hearer to tears as they become caught up in this meaningful experience. It is a genuine work of art which will probably be recorded by history as one of mankind's most gripping parables.

"Resurrection, Ode on a Burning Tank"
(The Holy Lands, October 1973)

Kenneth E. Bailey

I am a voice, a voice of spilt blood, crying from the land. The life is in the blood and for years my life flowed through the blood of a young man. My voice was heard through his voice and my life was his life. Then our volcano erupted and for a series of numbing days all human voices were silenced amid the heavy guns, the harsh clank of heavy tank tracks, the bone-jarring shudder of sonic booms as gladiators with million dollar swords killed each other high in the sky. Then suddenly, suddenly there was the swish of a rocket launcher; dirty yellow flash, all hell roared. The clanking of the great tracks stopped. My young man staggered screaming from his inferno, his body twitched and flopped in the sand, and I was split into the earth, into the holy earth, the Holy Land. The battle moved on. The wounded vehicles burned, scorched, cooled. The meat wagons carried the bodies away as the chill of the desert night settled on ridge and dune, and I stiffened and blackened in the sand. And then, and then in the timeless silence of the now scarred desert, there, there congealed in the land, in the land of prophet, priest and king, I

⁸Sam Keen, To a Dancing God (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), pp. 100-101.

heard a voice from other blood shed violently in the land. The voice told me this ancient story, ancient blood intoned this ancient tale.

"A certain man had two sons, one was rich and the other was poor. The rich son had no children while the poor son was blessed with many sons and many daughters. In time the father fell ill. He was sure he would not live through the week and so on Saturday he called his sons to his side and gave each of them half of the land of their inheritance. Then he died. Before sundown the sons buried their father with respect as custom requires. That night the rich son could not sleep. He said to himself, 'What my father did was not just. I am rich, my brother is poor. I have bread enough and to spare while my brother's children eat one day and trust God for the next. I must move the land marker which our father has set in the middle of the land so that my brother will have the greater share. Ah, but he must not see me. If he sees me he will be shamed. I must arise early in the morning before it is dawn and move the land marker.' With this he fell asleep, and his sleep was secure and peaceful.

"Meanwhile, the poor brother could not sleep. As he lay restless on his bed he said to himself, 'What my father did was not just. Here I am surrounded by the joys of many sons and many daughters while my brother daily faces the shame of having no sons to carry on his name and no daughters to comfort him in his old age. He should have the land of our fathers. Perhaps this will in part compensate him for his indescribable poverty. Ah, but if I give it to him he will be shamed. I must awake early in the morning before it is dawn and move the land mark which our father has set.'

"With this he went to sleep and his sleep was secure and peaceful. On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, a long time before it was day, the two brothers met at the ancient land marker. They fell with tears into each others' arms. And on that spot was built the City of Jerusalem."⁹

In the same artistic vein, but using the medium of the poem, Myra Brooks Welch tells a gripping story. Using an old violin being offered for sale by an auctioneer,

⁹Kenneth E. Bailey, "Resurrection, Ode on a Burning Tank" (Pittsburgh: Thesis Theological Cassettes), Vol. 5, No. 1.

some beautiful truth is told. This expression of projecting value into something that is considered worthless shows that persons need to be reminded of the worth of all persons, even the rejects of society. The lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost violin bring out this beautiful truth.

"The Touch of the Master's Hand"

Myra Brooks Welch

Twas battered and scarred, and the auctioneer
Thought it scarcely worth his while
To waste much time on the old violin,
But held it up with a smile:
"What am I bidden, good folks," he cried,
"Who'll start the bidding for me?"
"A dollar, a dollar"; "then, Two!" "Only Two?"
Two dollars, and who'll make it three?
Three dollars, once; three dollars, twice;
Going for three--" But no,
From the room, far back, a gray-haired man
Came forward and picked up the bow;
Then, wiping the dust from the old violin,
And tightening the loose strings,
He played a melody pure and sweet
As a caroling angel sings.

The music ceased, and the auctioneer,
With a voice that was quiet and low,
Said: "What am I bid for the old violin?"
And held it up with the bow.
"A thousand dollars, and who'll make it two?"
Two thousand, and who'll make it three?
Three thousand, once, three thousand, twice,
And going, and gone," said he.
The people cheered, but some of them cried,
"We do not quite understand
What changed it worth?" Swift came the reply:
"The touch of a master's hand."

And many a man with life out of tune,
And battered and scarred with sin,
Is auctioned cheap to the thoughtless crowd,
Much like the old violin.
A "mess of pottage," a glass of wine;
A game--and he travels on.
He's "going" once, and "going" twice,
He's "going" and almost "gone."

But the Master comes and the foolish crowd
 Never can quite understand
 The worth of a soul and the change that's wrought
 By the touch of the Master's hand.¹⁰

A shorter story, told of commonplace happenings,
 is "The Man Who Sold Hot Dogs," by John A. Cheley. Here is
 a simple account about a humble man who has an experience
 to share.

"The Man Who Sold Hot Dogs"

John A. Cheley

There was a man who lived by the side of the road and
 sold hot dogs.
 He was hard of hearing so he had no radio.
 He had trouble with his eyes so he read no newspapers.
 But he sold good hot dogs.
 He put up signs on the highway telling how good they
 were.
 He stood on the side of the road and cried: "Buy a
 hot dog, Mister?"
 And people bought.
 He increased his meat and bun orders.
 He bought a bigger stove to take care of his trade.
 He finally got his son home from college to help
 him out.
 But then something happened.
 His son said, "Father, haven't you been listening to
 the radio?"
 "Haven't you been reading the newspapers?"
 "There's a world crisis."
 "The European situation is terrible."
 "The domestic situation is worse."
 Whereupon the father thought, "Well, my son's been
 to college, he reads the papers and he listens to
 the radio, and he ought to know."
 So the father cut down on his meat and bun orders,
 took down his advertising signs, and no longer
 bothered to stand out on the highway to sell his
 hot dogs.

¹⁰Myra Brooks Welch, "The Touch of the Master's
 Hand," in Hazel Fellman (ed.), The Best Loved Poems of
 the American People (Garden City, NJ: Garden City Pub.
 Co., 1936), pp. 222-223.

And his hot dog sales fell almost overnight.
 "You're right, son," the father said to the boy.
 "We certainly are in the middle of a great world
 crisis."¹¹

Another story adapted from one by John A. Cheley is a graphic illustration of a picture seen by the mind's eye and imagination. There is an element of surprise at the end. This is similar to the switch in some of the New Testament parables, where something worthless and a burden becomes something valuable and desired.

"A Modern Parable"
 (adapted from "A Fable on Life")

John A. Cheley

Three Boy Scouts, on an overnight hike across the desert, heard a voice out of the darkness. "Stoop down, and fill your knapsacks with pebbles," as they crossed the dry bed of a river. The three obeyed, and filled every nook and corner of their backpacks. Again they heard the strange voice, "Go on your way. Tomorrow when the sun is hot in your face you will be both glad and sad."

As they walked along in the darkness they talked about the experience and pondered the thought as to how they could be both glad and sad in the morning. Then they grew quiet as they walked in the darkness, and soon their backpacks seemed to grow heavier and heavier throughout the night.

Then they began to lighten their packs, as one after another they reached back and removed pebble after pebble. They thought, they were never told just how many pebbles they had to carry, so they decided that only a few would be enough to satisfy the voice in the night.

In the morning, when the sun started to rise, hot with perspiration they stopped, and with the sun in their faces they opened their backpacks. A miracle had happened. The remaining pebbles had turned into precious stones. There were diamonds, rubies, opals,

¹¹John A. Cheley, Stories for Talks with Boys and Girls (New York: Association, 1958), pp. 163-164.

and sapphires. "If only we would have known," they lamented.

They were happy for the few precious stones they had saved, but sad for the many they had wasted.¹²

Biographical materials possess the ability to attract and hold attention, and tell meaningful stories. These stories stir up the affections and awaken the conscience. The biography speaks to the experiences within the subconscious of personality, especially where there are imperfections or handicaps. We seem to be drawn to a person who limps a little when he walks. Howard Thurman gives three such biographies, "Indebted To A Vast Host," "Just A Human Being," and "A Glory! A Benediction!" which are listed below.

"Indebted To A Vast Host"

Howard Thurman

He was a very ordinary-looking man walking along the sidewalk. It was at the close of day but darkness had not yet begun to spread its mantle everywhere. About three feet from the curbstone, a group of birds was pecking away at a small opening in the side of a pink paper bag. They were quarreling as they pecked because there must have been many suggestions being offered as to the best way to get to the crumbs that were hidden there. The man walked over to the spot; the birds took rapid flight, settling at a respectful distance in the grass, watching. With his foot he turned the bag over, examined it with some care, then reached down and emptied the bag and its contents of bread crumbs. When he had done this, he resumed his walk. As soon as he disappeared, the birds returned to find that a miracle had taken place. Instead of a bag full of hidden crumbs, only a glimpse of which they had seen, there was before them now a full abundance for satisfying their need. The man had

¹²Ibid., p. 218 (adapted from "A Fable on Life).

gone on his way without even a backward glance. Of course he could have walked away casting his glances back to feast his eyes on the results of his effort. Or he could have withdrawn far enough so as not to disturb the birds, and watched them eat while he congratulated himself because he was kind to birds and extremely sensitive to their needs. But he did none of these things. He went on his way without even a backward glance.¹³

"Just A Human Being"

Howard Thurman

He was a tall, very attractive man with a pronounced forehead and a shock of very dark hair. I had met him many years ago. He was blind. From the first, we seemed to be old friends; but I had not gotten acquainted with him in any detailed sense until very recently. When I visited his community, I arranged my schedule so that we could spend several hours together. We talked of many things--books, travel, baseball, and Fellowship Church. And then we talked about blindness, the kind of life a blind man lives and particularly how he regards the fact and the experience of his blindness.

"Since I saw you last," he said, "I have been doing some public speaking, particularly before Service Clubs. It is very difficult for even well-meaning people to regard me as just a human being. Out of sympathy or something, they make it hard for me to keep from feeling sorry for myself. If I do that, I am sunk. A certain sense of humor sometimes saves me. I remember one day being introduced to speak before a club. The chairman urged his group to give me a very courteous hearing because, after all, they were blessed with their eyesight--they were not like me--the least they could do for me was to give a respectful hearing. It was pretty rugged by the time he was through. When I stood up I took out my handkerchief and simulated tears, saying 'Please listen to me, please, because I am a poor, helpless blind man.' Perhaps I should not have done that, but it was in a good clean spirit and to my amazement my take-off was interrupted by a tremendous round of applause from all those present. The point was made.

¹³Howard Thurman, Meditations of the Heart (New York: Harper & Row, 1953), pp. 130-132.

"One thing I have learned in my blindness. My contact with people is direct and immediate. How a person looks, what he has on, what his gestures convey, not any of the things by which we bolster our self-respect or convey our meanings makes any difference to me. I cannot see--I can only hear. All your meaning, all of your integrity or looks--it must be put into words. And the words come without clothing. Sometimes it is dreadful--the exposure that is revealed when a person cannot hide behind his customary defenses. Had you thought of it?"

When the time came for me to leave, he walked over to his desk, fumbled through some papers, and came back to my chair. He turned to his wife and asked, "Is this what I think it is, a ten-dollar bill?" "Yes," she replied. Turning to me he said, "I want to give this for our church. I wish I could do more." He then repeated in measured tones, as to himself "The Church-for-the-Fellowship-of-All [*italics in the original*] -Peoples."

I left his home saying over and over, "God help us to grow up to that meaning and that faith."¹⁴

"A Glory! A Benediction!"

Howard Thurman

She sat beside the open hearth, her head tilting to one side as if she were listening for some urgent word. I noticed that this was the first time that I had ever seen her without her hearing aid. There was something white in the right ear, which I mistook for the plastic disc of a new aid to hearing. Closer scrutiny revealed that this was a piece of cotton. It was noticeable also that she was not following the movement of my lips with her customary concentration. And then I know. For the first time in many years, she was hearing unaided. I gathered in a few brief sentences that she had had an extremely delicate operation on one ear, and that thus far the results had been positive.

[She said,] "Think of it--to hear the sound of a truck or passing car. I find myself listening to hear the light switch from downstairs. Late at night, I sit in the darkness listening, always listening, to the whole new symphony of sounds beating in upon me. I finger them reverently and gently, distilling from each new sound the magic of its music and its wonder. What an exhilaration! What a glory! What a

¹⁴Ibid., pp. 132-134.

benediction!"

This experience was a high moment among many high moments of a lifetime. Hearing for me had been a part of the normal day's experience--a gift of God, the wonder of which had been dulled long since by the pattern of familiarity. Only the rare sound, or the unusual combination of sounds had stood out in my mind. Since then, I have been more sensitive to the meaning of sounds. Much I have learned about the miracle of the moment glorified in a sound, made up of myriad parts of many melodies. But all of this is threatened constantly by the commonplace--the risk that the glory will be tamed out by endless repetition. As I left the house of my friend, my heart whispered many thanks to God, that through her ears I had heard with new hearing, and sensed the sheer joy of the Eternal when He created sounds and grand symphonies of melodies to delight the mind and make glad the spirit.¹⁵

"Rowing Together," is a story adapted from a story by John A. Cheley. It is a simple story that speaks a clear message. Through the names of the two characters, Mr. Faith and Mr. Works, there could be criticism of using "religious jargon." However, the story can speak for itself.

"Rowing Together" (Adapted)

John A. Cheley

One beautiful, sunny afternoon, I stood on the sandy beach, looking out across an attractive lake. What a sight to behold, and on my day off, I enjoyed all the breathtaking colors. On the placid surface I saw two rowboats. I could see that each boat had a man in it. But the boats were going around and around in circles, but in opposite directions. Finally my curiosity got the better of me and I took my small boat, cranked up the motor, and went to investigate.

I came to the first boat, and for a moment I watched this man, rowing with all his strength, but

¹⁵Ibid., pp. 129-130.

he was spinning round and round like a great water skipper. He had only one oar, and it was on the left side of the boat. "Who are you," I asked. "My name is Faith and I am determined to put forth great effort," he said. But around and around he went.

I went to the next boat. This man also had only one oar, only his was on the right side of the boat. Around and around he went, but in an opposite direction. I asked, "And who are you?" He replied, "My name is Works, and I must work hard, be busy, and make a great effort. There is so much to be done." And around and around he went.

I said, "But you are getting nowhere. Do you know the man over there," and I pointed to the other boat. "His name is Mr. Faith. He also has only one oar. You two need to get together, for neither of you is making progress."

My suggestion was heeded. I took Mr. Works over to the other boat, introduced him to Mr. Faith, and they sat beside each other. Mr. Faith was on the left, Mr. Works was on the right. Both were pulling on their oars. The last I saw of them they were going across the lake. Together they made a great pair.¹⁶

The experience of Sam Keen during his early years describes a way of living, but in the process of getting educated, he lost his sensitivity and awareness. The question of the value of an education is not at stake here, but anything in life that crowds out awareness and intimacy takes away the real reason for living. There are religious overtones in this story.

"Education for Serendipity"

Sam Keen

Long ago, when I wore short pants and shot marbles with my left hand, I formed an impression of education which has recently returned to haunt me. Mrs. Jones' first-grade classroom always seemed dark, but on this particular day it was more depressing than usual. For an eternal afternoon I sat practicing my penmanship

¹⁶Cheley, p. 111 (adapted).

exercises, listening to Mrs. Jones' monotone: "Make your i's come all the way up to the middle line. And don't forget to make your o's nice and round. Circle, circle, circle. Period. Now repeat." Caught somewhere between boredom and despair I struggled against tears and settled in to wait for the resurrection--the 3:00 o'clock bell.

And then it happened. A movement in a tree outside the window caught my eye and there, in the sweet and redeeming light of the springtime world, was a summer warbler building a nest. Caught in wonder I followed the progress of the nest construction and dreamt of the time when I would be a great ornithologist. My i's and o's were forgotten until Mrs. Jones materialized over my shoulder and demanded to know why three lines in my penmanship book were empty. Instinct warned me that no serendipitous warbler, no private fascination, could provide an excuse for the neglect of my serious educational duties. So I bit my tongue, cherished my wonder in silence, and stayed after school to make up my lesson.

Mrs. Jones won more than the day. Schooling became a habit for me and I remained in the classroom for twenty-five years and five degrees without seriously questioning the maxim that private enthusiasm must be divorced from the educational task. In college and graduate school my attention was focused upon the ideas that are considered the necessary working capital of the educated man. I was introduced to theological, philosophical, biological, psychological, anthropological, and sociological models of man. I learned methodologies for solving cognitive problems, and techniques for discovering the universal message in the particular text. I studied the rules of evidence and verification and learned to penetrate to the layer of doubt which lay beneath each surface certainly given me by family and culture. Although it was nowhere explicitly stated, I found the motto of education to be: "Dubito ergo sum" (I doubt therefore I am). And for years I sat with cramped muscles in hardwood chairs (with initials carved in them) and listened to lectures on the necessity for dialogue (no one laughed) and on the incarnate and engaged character of human existence.

Scarcely ever in my quarter of a century of schooling was I invited to consider the intimate, personal questions which were compelling my attention outside the classroom. While I was taught to hunt down the general, the universal, the abstract, and the public facts of the exterior world, it was tacitly assumed that education had no responsibility for helping me come to terms with the particular, the concrete, the idiosyncratic, the biographical, and the sensuous facts which formed the substance of my private

existence. I learned little about the organization, appreciation, management, and care of that unique piece of human real estate which bears the legal name of Sam Keen.

It is not surprising that when I finally left the classroom I could dot my i's and make my o's round. But the warbler was gone. I emerged from graduate school to discover that I was empty of enthusiasm. I had a profession but nothing to profess, knowledge but no wisdom, ideas but few feelings. Rich in techniques but poor in convictions, I had gotten an education but lost an identity.¹⁷

A nature lesson in the form of the jack pine teaches some important lessons, not only about the plant world, but also the human possibility.

"The Seed of the Jack Pine"

Howard Thurman

In response to a letter of inquiry addressed to a Canadian forester concerning the jack pine which abounds in British Columbia, the following statement was received: "Essentially, you are correct when you say that jack pine cones require artificial heat to release the seed from the cone. The cones often remain closed for years, the seeds retaining their viability. In the interior of the province, the cones which have dropped to the ground will open at least partly with the help of the sun's reflected heat. However, the establishment of the majority of our jack pine stands has undoubtedly been established following forest fires. Seldom do the cones release their seed while on the tree."

The seed of the jack pine will not be given up by the cone unless the cone itself is subjected to sustained and concentrated heat. The forest fire sweeps all before it and there remain but the charred reminders of a former growth and a former beauty. It is then in the midst of the ashes that the secret of the cone is exposed. The tender seed finds the stirring of life deep within itself--and what is deepest in the seed reaches out to do what is deepest in life--the result? A tender shoot, gentle roots, until at last, there stands straight against the sky the

¹⁷Keen, pp. 38-40.

majestic glory of the jack pine.¹⁸

A good story can put personality in touch with new truth, awaken the reservoir of data stored in the subconscious, quicken the emotions, and prove to be a captivating and meaningful experience for persons of all ages. Like the poem, the story sermon as parable, and as an art form can share the message of the emotions which common language is unable to do. It helps the teller share his experience with others, and thus communicates in the realm of feelings. The story sermon uses simple language about simple experiences, but there is to be found the heavenly within the mundane.

The story sermon does not plumb the dimensions and characteristics of God but does tell of God meeting us in the experience of life. We are made aware of our nature, relationships, and potential. We become vulnerable to God. The story sermon has as much status and potential in today's religious experience as did the parables of Jesus in the primitive church. In fact, the precedence for using parabolic metaphor as a teaching model within the church has its historical beginnings in Jesus Christ. The story sermon as parable has credentials for use in the teaching ministry of the church, especially as a basic and unique part of the formal worship service.

¹⁸Thurman, pp. 82-83.

Chapter 5

THE STORY SERMON AS MINISTRY TO
CHILDREN AND ADULTS

See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are.¹

There is a wide range of attitudes toward the method and message of the story sermon within the church, from a controlled interpretation to an open-ended experience. Some leaders of worship set aside a certain period in the worship experience for a ministry strictly for children, where grownup concepts of theology and morality are explained through a story or object lesson. Simplified language and applications are used to capture the interest and understanding of the children. The story becomes an illustration or model of behavior to follow or avoid.

Though children may respond to this approach there are serious limitations in the technique. First, in such a controlled environment there is little opportunity for the children to use their God-given intuition and awareness to experience the story. Second, though grownups can listen in to the message to the children, and often enjoy the illustrations and simplified theological explanations, they also are denied the excitement and significance that

¹I John 3:1 (RSV)

comes when one is able to be caught up in the story event, and experience the story. Third, there are certain aspects of faith and love that cannot be taught by ordinary language and explanations.

The story as parabolic metaphor is open-ended, experiential, and gives God room. This method can speak to the deep needs and aspirations within a person, shatter old conceptions and models, and bring the listener face-to-face with the living God. Far from the traditional method of theologizing, allegorizing, and moralizing, the story itself confronts the listeners and calls for a decision within.

Jesus makes it clear that his stories are not just for children (as so many moderns see the function of story), but as a teaching model for all ages. The clue to experiencing the truth of a story lies within the sensitivity of the hearer to awareness. This is a quality that is inherent in little children but so often it is discounted and crowded out in the process of growing up. Some people, in following Paul's teaching for Christian maturity, avoid anything they consider childish. Paul stated, "When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became a man, I gave up childish ways."² One must grow from childish conceptions to spiritual maturity, but never at the expense of awareness

²I Corinthians 13:11 (RSV)

and intimacy.

The goal for the sensitivity to story is certainly not to be childish, but to be child-like, or in T.A. terms, to recapture the Natural Child ego state. This is what Jesus must have meant when he counseled the people to "receive the Kingdom of God as a Child." Jesus never counsels people to be childish, for this quality of life has all the overtones of brattiness, spoiledness, selfishness, and immaturity. Jesus does remind us that unless we are sensitized we will not be aware of the fact that the Kingdom of God is a potential reality, that it is "within our midst." This is the new birth that is necessary to recognize and accept the grace and love of God.

It is anticipated that some barriers to accepting the conception of an open-ended story sermon will prevent some clergypersons from trying this method. There is a strong tendency to moralize in a worship service. Everything is seen to be either right or wrong, and people must constantly be told to seek the good and avoid the bad. Rules are seen to be necessary to get people on the right track and keep them there. People seem to crave authority, and a legalistic approach to morality and theology gives concrete answers to every possible situation.

The worship service in a Protestant Church is generally based upon a seventeenth century model. Both the method and content of this style of worship give little room for individuality and freedom. Dogma and form are

seen as important factors in perpetuating tradition and parochialism. The minister as the educated teacher of the congregation is in charge of the worship service and responsible to God for what happens there. The worship centers about preaching the Word of God.

Seventeenth century theology pictured God as judgmental, being minutely concerned about sin. People could respond out of fear, not love, to such a demanding deity. Perfection was demanded. The original sin of Adam and Eve contaminates the human race making it necessary to get saved from God's wrath. Even newborn children must be baptized as soon as possible to assure that if misfortune would befall them, they would not suffer eternity in hell.

The worship service was several hours long and was attended under austere conditions. The services were endured, painful as they were. Rough benches, drafty sanctuaries, and fatiguing preaching were the order of the day. Sacrifice, denial, suppression of the flesh, avoiding temptation, getting right with God were stressed. The options were few. Repentance was the theme of worship.

These guidelines are still widely at work motivating clergy and lay people. This restricts the ability to try new and fresh approaches. Old "Parent Tapes" are still functioning, controlling the worship approach, keeping it within the bounds of the old time religion.

It is easy to follow a routine, and difficult to evaluate the traditional approach and try new methods.

Just the mechanics of finding new material for story sermons frightens many a clergyperson away from the use of the story sermon as metaphor. If, however, in the minister's reading he is alert to a good story he will soon be able to build up a good repertoire of stories. If a story is worth telling once it is worth telling again and again. The Christmas story is told annually with continued wonder, excitement, identification, and response.

Another handicap to the open-ended approach is the difficulty of the clergy to break role and shift to appropriate ego states in the service, especially to be able to be in the Natural Child ego state under Adult supervision in the telling of stories. So much of the traditional approach finds the clergy in the Critical Parent which gets a response from the Adapted Child of the people. To give up the security of the Parent or the Adult ego state is a step that some clergypersons seem to be unable or unwilling to take. The fear of taking a chance on a new technique is a close ally of this handicap.

Perhaps the greatest barriers to the open-ended approach are the thoughts that stories are for children and that children are seen as miniature adults who need an authoritarian approach to theology and morality. This produces a controlled approach for fear the little ones will not get the message and not change from their evil ways.

Using the story sermon as parabolic metaphor gives

an added dimension to the worship experience. It speaks to the aspirations and feelings of all persons, for as the venerable John tells us, we are all children of God. This is an all-inclusive term that refers to those who are child-like in their nature, young and old alike. These are the people of God who are sensitized to an awareness of the presence and power of God as revealed in the commonplace and mundane, who have responded to God's love and grace as revealed in and through Jesus Christ. Their qualities are openness, honesty, humility, responsiveness, teachableness, intuitiveness, sensuousness, spontaneity, and enthusiasm. In this frame of reference these people are close to the Kingdom of God. A person is never closer to the experience of the Kingdom of God than when she is under the magical power of a good story.

Sallie Te Selle has said it so beautifully:

We all love a good story because of the basic narrative quality of human experience; in a sense, any story is about ourselves, and a good story is good precisely because somehow it rings true to human life. . . . We recognize our own pilgrimages from here to there in a good story; we feel its movement in our bones and know that it is "right." . . . We love stories, then, because our lives are stories and we recognize in the attempts of others to move, temporally and painfully, our own story. We recognize in the stories of others' experiences of coming to belief our own agonizing journey and we rejoice in the companionship of those on the way.³

The story sermon can be an unique and effective

³Te Selle, Speaking in Parables (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975), pp. 138-139.

medium for leading people to an experience of the Kingdom of God.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

A. PSYCHOLOGY SOURCES

- Berne, Eric. Games People Play. New York: Grove, 1964.
- _____. Principles of Group Treatment. New York: Grove, 1966.
- _____. Transactional Analysis in Psychotherapy. New York: Grove, 1961.
- _____. The Structure and Dynamics of Organizations and Groups. New York: Grove, 1963.
- _____. What Do You Say After You Say Hello. New York: Grove, 1972.
- Bontrager, John D. Free the Child in You. Philadelphia: United Church Press, 1974.
- Harris, Thomas A. I'm O.K.--You're O.K. New York: Harper & Row, 1967.
- James, Muriel. Born to Love. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1973.
- _____, and Dorothy Jongeward. Born to Win. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1971.
- Steiner, Claude. Games Alcoholics Play. New York: Grove, 1971.
- _____. Scripts People Live. New York: Grove, 1974.

B. PARABLE SOURCES

- Crossan, John D. In Parables, The Challenge of the Historical Jesus. New York: Harper & Row, 1973.
- _____. The Dark Interval, Toward a Theology of Story. Niles, IL: Argus, 1975.
- Keen, Sam. To A Dancing God. New York: Harper & Row, 1970.
- _____, and Anne V. Fox. Telling Your Story. New York: New American Library, 1973.

Linnemann, Eta. Jesus of the Parables. New York: Harper & Row, 1966.

Lockyear, Herbert. All the Parables of the Bible. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1963.

Te Selle, Sallie. Speaking in Parables. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975.

Via, Dan O. The Parables. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1967.

Wehrli, Eugene S. Exploring the Parables. Philadelphia: United Church Press, 1963.

C. GENERAL SOURCES

Bailey, Kenneth E. "Resurrection, Ode on a Burning Tank, The Holy Lands, Oct. 1973, The power of a Parable." Chief of Chaplains Continuing Education Tape, Pittsburgh: Thesis Theological Cassettes. Vol. 5, No. 1.

Cheley, John A. Stories for Talks with Boys and Girls. New York: Association, 1958.

Cross, Luther. Object Lessons for Children. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1967.

Daly, Lloyd W. Aesop Without Morals. New York: Yoseloff, 1961.

Downs, Robert B. The Bear Went Over the Mountain, Tall Tales of American Animals. New York: Macmillan, 1964.

Dundee, Alan (ed.) The Study of Folklore. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1965.

Eakin, Mildred M., and Frank. The Pastor and the Children. New York: Macmillan, 1947.

Fellman, Hazel (ed.) The Best Loved Poems of the American People. Garden City, NJ: Garden City Pub. Co., 1936.

The Interpreter's Bible. 12 vols. Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1951.

James, M. R. (tr.) The Apocryphal New Testament. Oxford: Clarendon, 1969.

- Maus, Cynthia. Christ and the Fine Arts. New York: Harper & Bros., 1938.
- Nicoll, Maurice. The New Man. London: Stuart, 1958.
- Reich, Charles A. The Greening of America. New York: Random House, 1970.
- Rhymes, Douglas A. Through Prayer to Reality. Nashville: Upper Room, 1974.
- Rutherford, Peggy (ed.) African Voices, An Anthology of Native African Writings. New York: Vanguard, 1958.
- Sheehy, Gail. Passages, Predictable Crises of Adult Life. New York: Dutton, 1976.
- Schillaci, Anthony. Movies and Morals. Notre Dame, IN: Fides, 1970.
- Thurman, Howard. Meditations of the Heart. New York: Harper & Row, 1953.
- Webster's New World Dictionary. 2d College ed. Cleveland: Collins and World, 1976.